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SHORTER POEMS

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The Scribner English Classics

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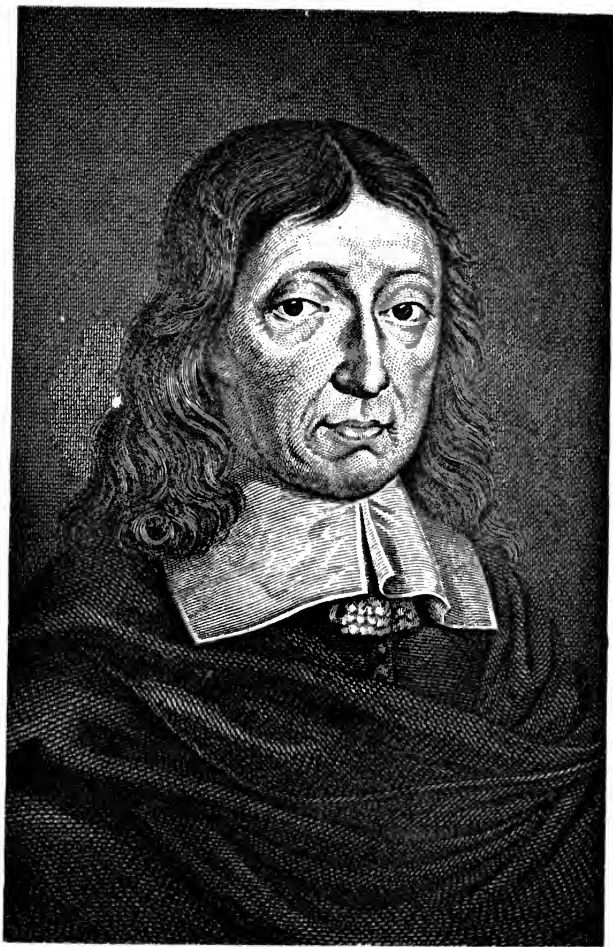
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John Milton
From an engraving

The Scribner English Classics

JOHN MILTON

COMUS, L'ALLEGRO
IL PENSEROSO
AND LYCIDAS

WITH OTHER OF MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PH.D., L.H.D., PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THE shorter poems of Milton that make up this volume comprise a group of poems among the most precious in English verse. They are classics in our literature, and as such must take their place wherever English poetry is read or studied. Milton is our most difficult poet, and calls for study; yet these poems are his least difficult work, and offer the student, therefore, not only their own worth as poetry, but also the easiest approach to the study and love of Milton.

It is the aim of this volume to help the teacher (who counts more than any book) not alone in preparing students for examination, but also in leading them to a true appreciation of Milton's poetry, in and for itself. To this end several poems, not usually required in the examinations for college entrance, have been included in the volume. The notes, it is hoped, will prove full, but not over-full. Needed help is given in regard to obsolete words, in illustration of Milton's borrowings, in explanation of his allusions, metaphors, the more difficult points in his prosody and (a neglected subject) his rimes; but non-essentials have been resolutely omitted.

It is always a pleasing duty to acknowledge one's indebtedness to one's predecessors—who, in the present case, form a long line from the early editors such as Warton, Todd, and Newton, to the veritable host of modern witnesses, more particularly Masson, Verity, and especially Osgood, whose admirable *Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems*, has imposed a lasting obligation upon every student of Milton. Due credit, it is believed, has been given in all cases, except such matters as have become commonplaces of Miltonic criticism.

Wherever views differing from current views are advanced, care has been taken to state current views as well.

The writer wishes for every student who uses this book such a love for Milton's poetry as may make a school-text seem an impertinence.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE	vii
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	x
DATES OF MILTON'S LIFE	xi
INTRODUCTION :	
I. THE LIFE OF MILTON	xiii
II. THE POETRY OF MILTON	xxii
TEXT OF SHORTER POEMS:	
ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY	3
ON SHAKESPEARE	14
ON HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE	15
L'ALLEGRO	16
IL PENSEROSO	21
COMUS	27
LYCIDAS	63
TO MR. H. LAWES, ON HIS AIRS	70
— ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT	71
— ON HIS BLINDNESS	72
NOTES	73
INDEX TO NOTES	157

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

TEXTS: The most convenient and instructive complete edition of Milton's poetical works for general reference is that of H. C. Beeching (Henry Frowde, New York, 1906), which reproduces the poems, English and Latin, in their original form from the editions of 1645 and 1673. Of annotated editions, the most useful are those of David Masson and A. W. Verity. Texts of special importance for the poems in this volume are the *Facsimile of the Manuscript of Milton's Minor Poems, preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, published by that University (available in few large libraries), and *Comus. Facsimile from the first edition of 1637* (Dodd, Mead), 1903.

SPECIAL TOPICS: Works of value on special topics are Robert Bridge's *Milton's Prosody* (Oxford, 1901), and C. G. Osgood's *Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems (Yale Studies in English)*, which is indispensable to the student of Milton.

BIOGRAPHY: The standard life of Milton is that of David Masson, 1859-94.

CRITICISM: Critical works upon the poet are innumerable, and the student may profitably confine himself to the essays of Addison, Dr. Johnson, and Macaulay (now chiefly of historic interest); of Lowell (in *Among My Books*, second series); of Walter Bagehot (in *Literary Studies*), and Edward Dowden (in *Puritan and Anglican, New Studies in Literature*), both invaluable; and the suggestive and illuminating memoirs by W. P. Trent (*John Milton*: Macmillan Company, New York, 1899), and Walter Raleigh (*Milton*: Putnam, New York, 1900).

DATES OF MILTON'S LIFE

FIRST PERIOD—1608–1639

- 1608. Born in London, December 9.
- 1625. Entered Christ's College, Cambridge (B. A., 1629; M. A., 1632; M. A., Oxford, 1635).
- 1632–1638. At his father's home in Horton.
- 1638–39. Travelled on the Continent.
- 1639. Returned to London.

SECOND PERIOD—1640–1660

- 1640. Leased a house in London.
- 1641–1644. Pamphlets in behalf of liberty.
- 1642. First sketch of a projected drama on *Paradise Lost*.
Civil War begins.
- 1643. Married Mary Powell.
- 1645. First edition of *Poems*.
- 1649. Charles I executed. Milton appointed Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth.
- 1649–1651. Tracts in defence of the Commonwealth.
- 1652. Became totally blind. Mary Powell dies.
- 1656. Married Catherine Woodcock.
- 1658. *Paradise Lost* begun. Second wife dies.
- 1660. The Restoration. Milton in hiding until the Act of Indemnity.

THIRD PERIOD

- 1660–1674. In retirement in London.
- 1663. Married Elizabeth Minshull.
- 1665. *Paradise Lost* finished.
- 1667. *Paradise Lost* published.
- 1671. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* published.
- 1673. Second edition of *Poems*.
- 1674. Revision of *Paradise Lost*. Died, November 8.

INTRODUCTION

I.—THE LIFE OF MILTON

JOHAN MILTON was born in London, December 9, 1608, and there died November 8, 1674. His life is usually divided, very helpfully, into three periods:

The first period, 1608–1639, includes his childhood and school-days, his stay of seven years at the University, his retirement for further study to his father's country home in Horton, and his travels on the Continent. The period is one of preparation for his chosen profession of poet. To it belong his lyrical poems, all but a few sonnets, and the dramatic poems, *Arcades* and *Comus*.

During the second period, 1639–1660, he laid aside poetry for prose. An ardent advocate of the Puritan cause, he wrote, on the outbreak of civil war, a series of tracts in behalf of political and religious liberty, served the Puritan Commonwealth as Latin Secretary, and was its appointed defender against the attacks directed against it by the exiled Royalists.

In the third period, 1660–1674, he lived, after the downfall of the Commonwealth, in retirement, and returned to his proper vocation, poetry. Apart from a few prose works of minor importance, he was engaged during this period upon the great epics, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and the drama, *Samson Agonistes*, upon which his fame chiefly rests.

Gracious influences surrounded Milton from childhood. John Milton, his father, was a man of culture, a lover of learning and literature, and a musician of sufficient skill, though an amateur, to win some distinction as a composer. He had become well-to-do as a scrivener, or law-stationer, and was

able, as he was eager, to give the most gifted of his children every advantage. Milton early showed promise as a student. He was prepared for the University by private tutors and at St. Paul's School, entered Christ's College, Cambridge, at the age of seventeen, remained there seven years, and received successively the Bachelor's and the Master's degrees.

As a mere lad in college, endowed as he was with exceptional strength of intellect and will, he seems to have displayed the independence of character and consciousness of superiority which marked him through life and which rendered him impatient of control and intolerant in judgment. In any one less serious and sincere, less eager and able to attain the highest excellence, his self-sufficiency and his tendency to find fault with the moral standards of others would have been still graver defects. We cannot, however, convict him of mere vanity and priggishness. He truly possessed, as he wrote later of himself in reference to his college days, "a certain niceness [*i. e.*, fastidiousness] of nature, an honest haughtiness and self-esteem of what I was or what I might be (which let envy call pride), and lastly that modesty whereof . . . though not in the title-page, yet here I may be excused to make some becoming profession." He was certainly an unusual student—not so much in the assurance with which he criticised, in part justly, the discipline and teaching of the college authorities, and still more the manners and morals of his fellow-students, who gave him the mocking title of "Lady," but in the fact that he had already set before himself a definite ambition, to be a poet and write on the highest themes, and had marked out for himself the means to attain it. After some little friction he found a way to lead his own life and win the full measure of profit he desired. An idea may be gained of the character and aim of his studies from his retrospect of his life at the University. He speaks of reading in the "grave orators" and historians and poets, and of the necessity he felt, in that in these evil and good were blended, of exercising care in taking what was good and leaving what was unworthy. It was not long after, he says, that he was confirmed in the opin-

ion "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy." Upon this lofty aim he concentrated himself, unheeding what standards might satisfy others or what prizes they might seek to gain—striving, with increasing knowledge, to maintain in his personal conduct ever loftier ideals of virtue, and, in his studies, bending every effort not merely to survey, but to make his own, in absolute conquest, whatever might contribute to those ideals in ancient and modern literatures, history, philosophy, and theology, with the intent to render a part of himself whatever they might teach him of truth, eloquence, and poetry. Nor did he make the mistake of centring his life in books to the exclusion of other things important in their place. Naturally well-formed and graceful—notably handsome, it may be added, as well—he was careful to perfect himself in the arts and accomplishments, such as horsemanship and fencing, appropriate to a gentleman.

The verse he wrote while at the University, even allowing for later careful revision, displays abundant promise. More particularly are to be noted the ode, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *At a Solemn Music*, *On Shakespeare*, and the sonnet *On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-three*.

It had been his father's hope that Milton would take orders in the Established Church, but, before he left the University, he had decided this to be impossible. All his sympathies were with the Puritan movement, which had been slowly gathering strength since the preceding century and in a few years was to lead to civil war. The Church in England after the Reformation was in law a national church, and included nominally every subject of the throne, its constituted head. Many, however, refused allegiance to it, being opposed to its doctrines or practice in various ways; indeed, among its professed members, there were wide differences of

opinion. So, in time, there arose, within and without the Church, the Puritan party.

Properly, at the outset, the term Puritan might apply to any one who made seriousness and sobriety of life a ruling principle, and regarded with disapproval the worldliness and laxity of life, with much that was scandalously evil, which characterized the Court circle in general and not a few of the bishops and clergy. More narrowly the term became identified with those who objected to doctrines or practices retained in the Church which they considered as "Popish," who believed that the Sabbath should be rigidly observed throughout as a day of prayer and meditation and not used in part as a holiday for recreation and merrymaking, and who insisted that the teachings of the Bible should be the sole rule and guide to the exclusion of the traditions of the Church. Some, moreover, did not believe in the union of the Church and State, and an important body, the Presbyterians, objected to the clerical orders, especially that of bishops, as not in accordance with the practice of the primitive church as established by Christ. Others wholly abjured the doctrine and authority of the Established Church—the so-called Independents, among whom the Baptists formed a notable body, with many minor sects, over a hundred, it is said, in the time of the Commonwealth. Even from this brief outline it is plain what a variety of opinions and shades of opinion upon a host of religious and political questions individual Puritans represented. God-fearing and God-seeking men there were on both sides. Also, on the other hand, many among the non-Puritans were utterly self-seeking and unprincipled, and many among the Puritans were ignorant and intolerant bigots and fanatics, wholly wild and unreasonable.

It is important to remember that the struggle originally was not between a Church party on the one hand and a Puritan party on the other; it went on within the Church itself. On one side within the Church were the "Prelatists," so called as led by the bishops, who, either through honest belief or motives of selfish interest, used every means, includ-

ing cruel persecution, to uphold the authority of the Church against what they termed unlicensed liberty of the individual conscience, and to maintain the clerical orders with their rights and privileges and the connection of Church and State, on which the Church's wealth and political power depended. On the other side, within the Church as well as without, were the Puritans, not necessarily opposed, many of them, in their individual beliefs to Church doctrine or practice in general, but maintaining the right of individual liberty of conscience, and (a large part of them) opposing the order of bishops and in particular condemning the manner of life of many of the adherents of the Prelatical party. Milton's father was a Puritan Churchman—he had been disinherited for becoming a Protestant. So also by inheritance was Milton, but, at the time he was at the University, the struggle between the two parties had for long been sharp and bitter, and it was the selfish worldliness, greed, tyranny, and arrogance of the Prelatical party, their injustice and cruelty in the repression of the Puritans, that made it impossible for him to take orders. He had been "church-outed," he said, "by the prelates." Later he was to break with all the organized religious bodies of his time.

On leaving the University, Milton went to his father's house in Horton in the midst of lovely country not far from London. His father did not press the question of a profession, and for five years he continued the course of study and meditation he had marked out for himself at the University. The time of preparation was long, but the fruits of it may be seen in the breadth and accuracy of his scholarship, the wealth of material he gathered for his poetry, the exquisite sensitiveness of his taste, and that perfected power of appreciating the just values and relations of things which constitutes culture. He held his purpose clear before him—to be a poet and sing the loftiest themes—and spared no labor, relieving his close study by walks and music and occasional visits to London to procure books. Toward the close of the five years he became a little impatient of his long seclu-

sion, but even then did not believe himself ready. To Charles Diodati, the dearly beloved friend of his school-days, he wrote, "Hear me, my Diodati, and suffer me for a moment to speak without blushing in a more lofty strain. Do you ask what I am meditating? By the help of Heaven, an immortality of fame. But what am I doing? *πτεροφυῶ*, I am letting my wings grow and preparing to fly; but my Pegasus has not feather enough to soar aloft in the fields of air." Finally in 1638 he left Horton for the Continent with the special object of visiting Italy. His charm of manner and scholarly attainments caused him to be received with marked distinction in Paris, Florence, Rome, and Naples. News of the political situation in England cut short his travels; he thought it base to be travelling for pleasure when his fellow-countrymen were contending for their liberty. Returning in 1639, he took lodgings in London, later leasing a comfortable house with a garden in Aldersgate Street. Here the first period of his life closes. While at Horton he had composed *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. In Italy he wrote his Italian sonnets and a Latin poem addressed to the Italian patron of learning and letters, Manso. Upon his return he wrote an elegiac poem in Latin on the death of his friend Diodati. Now, save for a few sonnets, he was to bid farewell to poetry for nearly twenty years.

Settled in London, Milton undertook the teaching of his two nephews. Several other pupils were in time added, forming a small school. His real occupation, however, was with the religious and political controversy which was engaging all men's minds. The burning question of the moment was the form of church government which should prevail in the Established Church. Twice the King had sent armies into Presbyterian Scotland and had been repulsed. Between these two campaigns he had convened Parliament to obtain money, had been presented instead with a petition for the redress of grievances, and had ordered its dissolution. This Parliament, because of its short session, is called the "Short Parliament." Failing in his second campaign, he

convoked what is termed from its long session the "Long Parliament." Milton at once lent his aid in opposition to Episcopacy. His series of pamphlets, four in all, appeared in 1641, 1642. In 1643 he surprised his friends by suddenly marrying a young girl belonging to a Royalist family, Mary Powell. After little more than a month she left him and they remained separated for two years, when they were reunited. She died in 1653 or 1654, leaving three daughters. Milton's separation from his wife led to his writing, in 1643-1645, four pamphlets in behalf of divorce. In 1644 he published his most notable prose work, the *Areopagitica*, a plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing, that is, for a free press. In the same year appeared a tractate, *On Education*, and, in 1645, the first edition of his poems. He was also engaged at intervals upon a history of England, not completed till much later; and he composed at various times a few sonnets.

An important change in his life came in the year 1649. For seven years war had been waged between the Royalists and the Parliamentary forces. It ceased for a time with the King's capture by the Scotch allies. A part of the Parliamentary party favored the establishment of a State Church under the Presbyterian form of government without recognition of the Independents. Others, including Cromwell and the army, favored, and were successful in obtaining, entire liberty of conscience and worship. After fruitless negotiations, an alliance between the King and the Scots led to a renewal of civil war, the capture of the King by the Parliamentary army, and finally, in 1649, his trial and execution. There were many, even among those opposed to the King, who regarded this act with horror. Milton was not one of these; he defended and justified it in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. His ability as a controversialist, as well as his learning and scholarship, led to his appointment as Latin Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. In addition to purely secretarial duties, he answered attacks upon the new Commonwealth. The *Eikon Basilike* ("Royal Image"), designed to arouse pity and indignation for the King's death and passing for a time

as the work of the King himself, Milton met with a tractate entitled *Eikonoklastes* ("The Image Breaker"). In the following year, Salmasius of Leyden, perhaps the most notable scholar of the day, put forth, under commission of the Royalists in exile, his *Defensio Regia*. Milton, in his *Pro Populo Anglicano* and a *Defensio Secunda*, published after his opponent's death, disposed of Salmasius and those who had taken the place of Salmasius in the controversy with such effectiveness that Europe was astonished alike by his command of Latin and his powers of argument and invective. From childhood Milton's eyesight had been weakened by assiduous study. In spite of the warning conveyed by his losing the use of one eye, he persisted in his labors for the Commonwealth, and in 1652 had become totally blind. He still held his post as Secretary with the aid of an assistant, until, with the year 1660, came the Restoration and the ruin of the cause he had toiled to uphold. Here his second period closes.

Critics are at one in deploring Milton's devotion during nearly twenty years to controversial writing. It was a loss to poetry in any case, and, except for the *Areopagitica*, a truly noble work, together with scattered passages of genuine elevation and eloquence in other works, one might well wish the prose works of this period had never been written. Milton was inspired by a true passion for liberty, but, unfortunately, he was constantly preoccupied in meeting vile personal abuse with abuse as vile. It seems almost incredible that so naturally fine a nature should have descended to such offensive personalities and scurrilities as he employed. The fact displays, perhaps, the violent extremes to which a sensitive and refined spirit may be driven in forcing itself to do what is naturally alien to its temperament and disposition.

It must have seemed as if the Restoration spelled irrevocable disaster to the poet. But, blind though he was, ruined in fortune as a political outlaw, in danger of his life and in hiding till the Act of Indemnity left him safe, none the less no event could have been more fortunate both for him and for the world. Critics agree that his twenty years of controversy left Milton narrowed and hardened, and with his natural tendency

to harshness and intolerance increased. We may not say, however, that it lessened the great powers that were now to justify themselves in transcendent poetic achievement. Already in 1642 the first conception of *Paradise Lost* had appeared among a number of his notes of subjects for dramas and poems. The poet's intention then seems to have been to treat this subject in dramatic form, and he appears to have then actually begun such a drama. He took up the theme again in the form of an epic in 1658, completed it in 1665, and published it in 1667. The poet's Quaker friend, Elwood, who was the first to read it, suggested by an inquiry its continuation in *Paradise Regained*, which was published in 1671. With it was published *Samson Agonistes*, a play in which the poet speaks of himself under the guise of the blinded Samson, and which is adjudged to approach more nearly than any other work in English to the simplicity and sublimity of Greek tragedy. Several prose works belong also to this period—the *History of Britain*, begun long before, a pamphlet on *True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration*, not free from Milton's own intolerance, a *History of Muscovy*, a Latin grammar, a treatise in Latin on logic, and an extended exposition, also in Latin, of Christian doctrine.

Milton's life during this third period was fairly peaceful, despite the insubordination of his daughters, on whom he laid tasks beyond their ability in the help he required of them in his writing—they even, it is said, sold his books secretly to get money for their needs—with the result, finally, that they were sent away to shift for themselves. A second marriage, contracted in 1656, had lasted only two years; he married a third time in 1663. His days were quietly spent in reading and dictation, in caring for his garden, and in the enjoyment of music, to which he was devoted throughout his life, either playing himself on the organ or listening to his wife singing. He had friends, and visitors were drawn to his house by his reputation for learning and through admiration for his poetry. He died in 1674, and was buried in St. Giles' Church, Cripplegate, London, beside his father.

II.—THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like all great poets, Milton was indebted in part to the influences of his time, in part to the instinctive leadings of his individual genius and temperament. His first period lies within the close of the Elizabethan era, and his verse evidences his close study of its poets, greater and less. Of these Spenser, like himself Puritan and interpreter of ideals of virtue in poetry, was his acknowledged master, and to Shakespeare—especially in the use of the felicitous phrase, forming a poem in itself—his debt was not small. But more important than such inspiration is the fact that he, himself, is Elizabethan, and displays the same influences (working, moreover, directly within him, not through others) that made the Elizabethan period so great. He has been called the last of the Elizabethans, and with truth, if his relations to his age are rightly understood.

One main influence in the Elizabethan period was the Renaissance, and the new conceptions of life, scholarship, philosophy, and literature it brought to England from France and Spain, but most of all from Italy, where earliest and most fully the change from mediæval habits of thought, summed under the term, were worked out. These new conceptions opened a new world of opportunity, and, in their full fruition in England toward the close of the sixteenth century, created men of genius in such array as no other period in any country has equalled, drawing them from every station of life. The literature of the Elizabethan period is characterized by its apparently exhaustless creative energy; its delight in the new beauty it sought for, found, and expressed, its extension of the range of poetic conceptions and forms, its spontaneity and freshness. This spirit and temper in literature, centring in the eager search for and delight in the expression of new beauty, is known by the term "romantic." Milton's inspiration, as we shall

see in a moment, was romantic in this sense. On the other hand, we must recall that Milton's life extended to 1674. During his lifetime, a change was coming over poetry. The age had become more serious and reflective under the influence of Puritanism and the awakening interest in scientific thought. Milton's contemporaries, like him, drew inspiration from their great forerunners; but a slackening of poetic energy can be perceived, the verse, while often of great beauty, is of a more grave and sober tone, more self-conscious, and there is a tendency to model it on a set pattern. At the close of the century poetry had become in general rhetorical; it is made to conform to what has grown to be the accepted taste of the time and not a fresh image and form of beauty conceived in the poet's mind. Poetry of this marked tendency is called "classical," as if patterned on a model held to be of classical excellence. It seeks to appeal to the reader by treating with superior distinction subjects within a special range which are dictated by the taste of the time as poetic, and in a special form demanded by that taste. In brief, the taste of the time becomes the test of poetic excellence, not the poet's instinctive sense, freely exercised, of what is beautiful.

It is because Milton lived while this change was going on, but is not affected by it, that he may truly be called the last of the Elizabethans. He was a true Elizabethan in that he was a law unto himself as regards his conception of the beauty proper to poetry. Still more, he was a true Elizabethan in searching out and discovering for himself new stores of poetic beauty. This he did, most notably, in his use of the poetry of the ancients, especially Latin poetry, which he had studied so ardently at school, at the University, and at Horton, during his period of preparation. Others before him, of course, his own master Spenser, for example, had drawn upon this poetry, and use of it is common enough in Elizabethan literature. But no one had studied it as he had done, or at least to such profit, with the set intent of writing worthily in English verse. Where others merely touched the surface and carried away an occasional phrase or image, he explored and made his own an immense

treasure. The world of classic literature is to him what Italian literature was to the earlier Elizabethans, a new world of beauty to be brought over into English verse.

This was one main source of his verse. The Bible was another. If his deep piety constrained his reverence for the Scriptures, if his preoccupation with moral and religious ideals led him to its study and use, by no means any the less was his appreciation of the beauty of its sublime conceptions, its graphic imagery, the verbal felicity of the English version whose phrases are so often transferred bodily to his lines.

A point of the greatest importance in this connection is the fact that in the common appeal to him of classic literature and of the Scriptures through the element of poetic beauty, the two became as if one to him. That is why he fails to feel a difference in kind between Hebrew and Christian ideas and conceptions and classical ideas and conceptions. He does not hesitate to fuse them together, to pass from one to the other, seemingly unconsciously, in his verse, in a way that would be quite impossible to-day. This failure to feel unlikeness in kind, this willingness to bring together things dissimilar, so long as each in its kind contributes to the poetic purpose in hand, is essentially characteristic of the Renaissance.

If we see clearly that Milton was essentially an Elizabethan, it is in the next place important to remember that he desired to perfect himself as poet that he might express moral ideas, set forth ideals of virtue in his verse. Moral ideas are, of course, wholly suitable themes for poetry, though no one should make the mistake common enough though so evident, of thinking that literature or any other art exists or should exist for, or that excellence therein is bound up with, the expression of moral ideas. Most surely poetry may express moral ideas, but it must do this in a manner proper to poetry, or the result is not poetry but something else. No poet can concern himself with the expression of moral ideas that need didactic treatment, the method of the teacher, exposition, argument, and exhortation, without endangering the quality of his poetry. With Milton the moral purpose is as constantly in mind as the artistic. In

his verse from *Comus* through the great epics to *Samson Agonistes* appear innumerable passages in which the moral purpose is at variance with his instinctive poetic inspiration. This is one reason, together with the studied perfection of his style and its chastened severity due to his study of the ancients, why many find fault with his poetry as being rhetorical. Rhetorical it seldom or never is in a bad sense. His emotional sensitiveness to beauty, his exquisite taste, the divine energy of his genius, his exaltation of vision, lift even passages of argument and moralizing above the plane of rhetoric and insure them, as by a miracle, some measure of the quality of magic that belongs to the highest poetry.

In considering the relation of Milton's themes, his subject matter, to the form of its expression, it may be noted that his Elizabethan passion for beauty was regulated and controlled by his study of the classics, and often to greater or less extent chilled and obstructed by didacticism. It is also necessary to point out, as Bagehot and others have done, that Milton's mind was not fruitful in varied thought and reflection. In Shakespeare, and in many poets inferior to Milton, the central theme, the character of the speaker as dramatically conceived by the poet, a special incident in hand, suggestions of various sorts, inspire thoughts that possess independent value and appeal apart from their relation to the immediate theme. In Milton there is little or nothing of this. His mind concentrated itself upon a single idea, and this is repeated and reinforced, unattended by associated or suggested thoughts. But on the other hand he employs in the expression of the single idea a multiplicity of imagery and illustration, drawing upon the seemingly exhaustless stores of his reading and observation. The poems in this volume display this characteristic; to it rather than to lack of dramatic power may be referred his weakness in characterization both in the epics and in *Samson Agonistes*; his prose works also are all variations, without advance and development, upon single themes. In the words of Bagehot, "We have a superficial complexity in illustration and imagery and metaphor, and in contrast with it we observe a

latent simplicity of idea, an almost rude strength of conception. The underlying thoughts are few, though the flowers on the surface are so many."

Whence, we may next ask, did Milton derive this wealth of imagery and illustration? How far was he indebted to nature and life directly, how far to books? No one can doubt that Milton was observant of the world about him, that he loved and drew from nature, though, like other seventeenth-century poets, the nature he preferred was one subdued to a kindly relation with man's life—flowers, trees in smooth meadows, the gently gliding stream, a smiling countryside. He was not a close student of individual facts, and lacks the intimate touches that show close sympathetic observation. In brief, it is evident that whatever his inclination or ability to observe facts in human life or in nature directly, the main source of his poetic material was derived from books. His indebtedness in words, phrases, allusions, images, to his predecessors in English verse, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Browne, Quarles, Drayton, and many another, and in incalculable measure to the Latin and Greek poets he studied so assiduously, appears everywhere. But, be it carefully noted, this is not a mere borrowing, a bodily transference to his verse of what served his purpose. In all cases he is guided by his infallible perception of truth and beauty, and he makes what he takes his own, giving it a new, individual, and imperishable beauty of form and setting. No doubt, as Bagehot has said, he was often unaware at the moment, so stored was his mind with the fruits of his reading, that he was using what in some form had been used before. Moreover, beautiful images and allusions wholly original with him are also innumerable.

Before summing up the qualities of Milton's verse, a word is necessary in regard to its metrical structure. It is of prime importance to remember that it is in every respect true English verse, idiomatic in its observance, even where most individual and characteristic, of English traditions. It might be supposed that Milton, in his writing of verse, might have been influenced to model it in some way upon that of the classic poets he studied

so closely, just as he now and again introduces a Latin locution into his English diction. But he does not—the balance and movement of his blank-verse line may have caught something from classic verse, but the metre is English. Individual peculiarities there are in his verse, but these are not departures from English tradition—they are his own consciously adopted licenses in following out that tradition. How essentially English his verse is may be seen in the fact that his blank-verse line not infrequently has only four chief accents, a form of line traceable back to the Old English alliterative long line.

Milton's place in English literature and in the literature of the world is due to two causes of somewhat different kind. The first is the sustained elevation of poetic quality in his verse, both epic and lyric, notable even where a didactic purpose is present—an elevation due at once to energy of inspiration, refinement of critical taste, and the amassed riches of his reading. It has often been said that if he had written nothing but the shorter poems of his first period, he would have taken a place in the first rank of English poets. His indebtedness to the past, his aspiration to emulate or to transcend its worthiest poetry, his scrupulous loyalty to the highest ideals of taste, would by themselves have insured his verse a high place in the literature of the world; but also, in addition, he essayed in *Paradise Lost* and in *Paradise Regained* at once the most sublime and the most difficult themes possible, the Fall and Redemption of Man. To this task, in addition to his poetic genius and training, he brought the inspiration of the loftiest faith and moral purpose, implicit trust in his own powers, and a concentration of will in which was bound up the anticipations of a lifetime. Matured as he was within the influences of the Renaissance, he never dreamed of any inartistic incongruity in combining material of whatever kind that lay to his hand, biblical and classical, Christian and pagan, mythical or drawn from the advanced scientific thought of his day. Nor did he hesitate, as a poet of to-day would hesitate, to picture the affairs of heaven as conducted like those of earth, in a way that sometimes makes possible the cheap ridicule of the unhistoric and irreverent

critic. But, despite incongruities incidental to these causes, despite the heavy burden of his didactic purpose, despite his probable deficiency in dramatic ability, he lifts his narrative not merely to the ideal elevation of the epic, but to a sublimity so far transcending the conceptions of ordinary men as to make it seem veritably an inspired record of what he describes, "things unattempted yet in prose or rime." And here, three hundred years after Milton's birth, it is worth while for a moment to touch upon the question whether, as has been asserted, Milton has ever truly laid hold upon the popular heart. As criticism, such an assertion is in one sense meaningless. Such tests do not apply in such a case. An achievement like Milton's, time can no more touch than it can the pinnacles of the mountain or the cathedral and its towers—save with the universal decay which is the death of time—and, like the abbeys of England, Nature "grants to it an equal date with Andes and with Ararat." But, in itself, the assertion is not true. Milton's fame is not alone due to the tributes of historians, the verdicts of critics, the homage of brother-poets—"third among the sons of light," "God-gifted organ-voice of England,"—or to the fealty alone of the scholarly and "cultured" class. The old story that he was not honored in his own time is fiction. Since that time he has always had in all classes those who made him their special poet, precisely in the sense in which we speak of Shakespeare or Burns or Longfellow as close to the popular heart. In England he has as poet commanded a veneration that links his name with Shakespeare's even among those to whom Milton the man was virtually a regicide. In this country, when he finally became known, his works were placed beside the Bible alike in Puritan New England, in Quaker Pennsylvania, and in the South, and it was a common thing three generations ago for children or their elders to commit long passages from the epics, even whole books, to memory. And possibly it might surprise some persons who think of Milton merely as a classic, honored but unread, could they but know how many people—unliterary people—still set precious store by him to-day.

If, however, many persons can pay only an intellectual tribute to the great epics, not one of real liking, all must do honor to the shorter poems included in this volume. What may the study of these poems mean to us to-day? They are set for examination, and are to be studied, because they are poems of a special beauty, of a kind to help us to understand what true poetry is and what it may mean to those who learn to care for it. There are many persons in the world who have never learned what poetry may mean to them, and who live lives so much the poorer for lack of the pleasure it may bring. There are many so ignorant as to despise it as something only unpractical people care for, as something likely to unfit one to be sensible and practical—a wholly mistaken and absurd notion. A love for poetry is a lifelong gain. Like a love for music or painting, or, in their place, one or another bodily accomplishment, some trouble must be taken to attain it. And poems like these help one to a true appreciation of poetic beauty. Just as Milton trained his taste by the study of English and classic poets to an exquisite sensitiveness of perception, so may we to-day train and refine ours by the study of the verse in which his perfected taste found expression.

One or two practical suggestions may be made. In the case of each poem, first read the special introduction given in the notes. Then read the poem itself throughout before studying it in detail. Read it aloud, for no good poetry is meant for the eye alone; the mental ear in any case—much better the physical ear—should hear it. Then turn to the study of the poem line by line, making sure that each image and allusion is understood, and all that Milton intended it to convey. The notes supply the necessary information, and here a word of warning is necessary. It is not desirable to memorize the notes. If, for example, it is pointed out that the poet is indebted to some predecessor in a particular passage, the fact is of importance only in illustration of his frequent use of others and his extraordinary gift of making what he took his own. This does not, of course, apply to many of the classic allusions, especially in mythology, for these are often stock poetic allusions

that should be familiar to every one; so also the meaning of unfamiliar words, such as are part of the vocabulary of poetry, should be learned. But, in every case, it is to be remembered that these things are all of secondary and minor importance as compared with clearly understanding the verse and learning to care for its beauty of meaning and sound. It is this which is best worth while—that Milton may help us to know and to care for all good poetry.

MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS



MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS

I

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,

5

That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he went at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,

10

Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein 15
 Afford a present to the Infant God?
 Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
 To welcome him to this his new abode,
 Now while the Heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,
 Hath took no print of the approaching light, 20
 And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

IV

See how from far upon the eastern road
 The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet!
 O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
 And lay it lowly at his blessèd feet; 25
 Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
 And join thy voice unto the angel choir,
 From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

The Hymn

I

It was the winter wild,
 While the Heaven-born Child 30
 All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
 Nature, in awe, to him
 Had doffed her gaudy trim,
 With her great master so to sympathize;
 It was no season then for her 35
 To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair

She woos the gentle air

To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,

And on her naked shame,

Pollute with sinful blame,

The saintly veil of maiden white to throw—

Confounded, that her Maker's eyes

Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

40

III

But he, her fears to cease,

Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;

She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding

Down through the turning sphere,

His ready harbinger,

With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,

And, waving wide her myrtle wand,

She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

45

50

IV

No war, or battle's sound,

Was heard the world around;

The idle spear and shield were high uphung;

The hookèd chariot stood

Unstained with hostile blood;

The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;

And kings sat still with awful eye,

As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

55

60

V

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light .

His reign of peace upon the earth began.
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,

65

Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

VI

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,

70

Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,

Or Lucifer that often warned them thence,
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

75

VII

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,

The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame

80

The new-enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn, 85
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row.
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below; 90
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep,

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook, 95
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took;
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close. 100

X

Nature, that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done, 105
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
 A globe of circular light, 110
 That with long beams the shamefaced Night arrayed;
 The helmèd Cherubim,
 The sworded Seraphim
 Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
 Harping in loud and solemn choir, 115
 With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)
 Before was never made,
 But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,
 While the Creator great 120
 His constellations set,
 And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
 And cast the dark foundations deep,
 And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres, 125
 Once bless our human ears,
 If ye have power to touch our senses so;
 And let your silver chime
 Move in melodious time,
 And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow; 130
 And with your ninefold harmony
 Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

XIV

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the Age of Gold; 135
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day. 140

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow, and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen, 145
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so; 150
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorify;
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep, 155
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the
deep,

XVII

With such a horrid clang
 As on Mount Sinai rang,
 While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake;
 The agèd Earth, aghast, 160
 With terror of that blast,
 Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
 When at the world's last session
 The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII

And then at last our bliss 165
 Full and perfect is,
 But now begins; for, from this happy day,
 The Old Dragon under ground,
 In straiter limits bound,
 Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway, 170
 And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
 Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb;
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving. 175
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell. 180

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
 From haunted spring, and dale
 Edged with poplar pale, 185
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
 With flower-inwoven tresses torn
 The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
 And on the holy hearth, 190
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
 In urns and altars round,
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
 And the chill marble seems to sweat, 195
 While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baälim
 Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
 And moonèd Ashtaroth, 200
 Heaven's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
 The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;
 In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz
 mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled, 205
 Hath left in shadows dread
 His burning idol all of blackest hue;
 In vain with cymbals' ring
 They call the grisly king,
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue; 210
 The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
 Isis and Orus and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
 In Memphian grove or green,
 Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud, 215
 Nor can he be at rest
 Within his sacred chest;
 Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;
 In vain, with timbrelled anthems dark,
 The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark. 220

XXV

He feels from Judah's land
 The dreaded Infant's hand;
 The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
 Nor all the gods beside
 Longer dare abide, 225
 Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
 Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
 Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd crew.

XXVI

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red, 230
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted fays 235
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII

But see! the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest.
Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven's youngest-teemèd star 240
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

II

ON SHAKESPEARE, 1630

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
The labor of an age in pilèd stones?
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame, 5
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.
For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavoring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart 10
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie 15
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

III

ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth 5
That I to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
Than some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

IV

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
 Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
 In Stygian cave forlorn,
 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
 unholy!
 Find out some uncouth cell, 5
 Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
 wings,
 And the night-raven sings;
 There under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
 As ragged as thy locks,
 In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell. 10
 But come, thou goddess fair and free,
 In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
 And by men heart-easing Mirth,
 Whom lovely Venus at a birth
 With two sister Graces more 15
 To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore;
 Or whether (as some sager sing)
 The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
 Zephyr with Aurora playing,
 As he met her once a-Maying, 20
 There, on beds of violets blue,
 And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
 Filled her with thee a daughter fair,
 So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee 25
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathèd Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek; 30
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee 35
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty ;
And, if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unprovèd pleasures free: 40
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise,
Then to come, in spite of sorrow, 45
And at my window bid good morrow
Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin, 50
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill, 55
Through the high wood echoing shrill;

Some time walking, not unseen,
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
 Right against the eastern gate,
 Where the great sun begins his state, 60
 Robed in flames and amber light,
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
 While the ploughman near at hand
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe, 65
 And the mower whets his scythe,
 And every shepherd tells his tale
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
 Whilst the landskip round it measures; 70
 Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
 Mountains on whose barren breast
 The laboring clouds do often rest;
 Meadows trim with daisies pied, 75
 Shallow brooks and rivers wide.
 Towers and battlements it sees
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,
 Where perhaps some beauty lies,
 The cynosure of neighboring eyes. 80
 Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
 From betwixt two aged oaks,
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
 Are at their savory dinner set
 Of herbs and other country messes, 85
 Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
 And then in haste her bower she leaves,
 With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;

Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead. 90
 Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid 95
Dancing in the checkered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faëry Mab the junkets eat,
She was pinched and pulled, she said,
And he, by friar's lanthorn led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat 105
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end,
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend, 110
And stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
 Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold, 120

With stores of ladies, whose bright eyes
 Rain influence, and judge the prize
 Of wit, or arms, while both contend
 To win her grace whom all commend.
 There let Hymen oft appear 125
 In saffron robe, with taper clear,
 And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
 With mask, and antique pageantry:
 Such sights as youthful poets dream
 On summer eves by haunted stream. 130
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,
 If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,
 Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
 Warble his native wood-notes wild.
 And ever, against eating cares, 135
 Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 Married to immortal verse,
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
 In notes with many a winding bout
 Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out, 140
 With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running,
 Untwisting all the chains that tie
 The hidden soul of harmony,
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head 145
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto to have quite set free
 His half-regained Eurydice. 150
 These delights if thou canst give,
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

V

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding joys,
 The brood of folly without father bred!
 How little you bested,
 Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!
 Dwell in some idle brain, 5
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
 As thick and numberless
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
 Or likest hovering dreams, 5
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. 10
 But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!
 Whose saintly visage is too bright
 To hit the sense of human sight,
 And therefore to our weaker view 15
 O'erlaid with black, staid wisdom's hue;
 Black, but such as in esteem
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
 Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
 To set her beauty's praise above 20
 The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended.
 Yet thou art higher far descended.
 Thee bright-haired Vesta, long of yore,
 To solitary Saturn bore,—

His daughter she (in Saturn's reign, 25
 Such mixture was not held a stain).
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
 He met her, and in secret shades
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
 While yet there was no fear of Jove. 30

Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,
 All in a robe of darkest grain,
 Flowing with majestic train,
 And sable stole of cypress lawn 35
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,
 With even step, and musing gait,
 And looks commercing with the skies,
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes. 40
 There held in holy passion still,
 Forget thyself to marble, till,
 With a sad leaden downward cast,
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
 And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet, 45
 Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
 And hears the Muses in a ring
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
 And add to these retirèd Leisure,
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure; 50
 But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
 Him that yon soars on golden wing,
 Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,
 The cherub Contemplation;
 And the mute Silence hist along, 55
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,

In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er th' accustomed oak. 60
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen 65
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way, 70
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore 75
Swinging slow with sullen roar; A
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removèd place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, T 80
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp at midnight hour 85
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere

- The spirit of Plato, to unfold
 What worlds, or what vast regions hold 90
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook,
 And of those demons that are found
 In fire, air, flood, or underground,
 Whose power hath a true consent 95
 With planet, or with element.
 Sometime let gorgeous tragedy
 In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
 Presenting Thebes', or Pelops' line,
 Or the tale of Troy divine. 100
 Or what (though rare) of later age
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
 But, O sad Virgin, that thy power
 Might raise Musæus from his bower,
 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing 105
 Such notes as, warbled to the string,
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
 And made Hell grant what Love did seek.
 Or call up him that left half told
 The story of Cambuscan bold, 110
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
 And of the wondrous horse of brass,
 On which the Tartar king did ride; 115
 And if aught else great bards beside
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
 Of tourneys, and of trophies hung;
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,
 Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
 Till civil-suited Morn appear,
 Not tricked and frowned as she was wont
 With the Attic boy to hunt,
 But kerchiefed in a comely cloud, 125
 While rocking winds are piping loud,
 Or ushered with a shower still,
 When the gust hath blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves,
 With minute drops from off the eaves. 130
 And when the sun begins to fling
 His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
 To archèd walks of twilight groves
 And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
 Of pine or monumental oak, 135
 Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
 Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
 There in close covert by some brook,
 Where no profaner eye may look, 140
 Hide me from day's garish eye,
 While the bee with honied thigh,
 That at her flowery work doth sing,
 And the waters murmuring,
 With such consort as they keep, 145
 Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;
 And let some strange mysterious dream
 Wave at his wings in airy stream
 Of lively portraiture displayed,
 Softly on my eyelids laid; 150
 And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
 Above, about or underneath,

Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail 155
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antic pillars massy proof.
And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light. 160
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthems clear
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies 165
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell 170
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give, 175
And I with thee will choose to live.

VI

COMUS

THE PERSONS

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterward in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his crew.

The LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, the Nymph.

The chief persons which presented were:

The LORD BRACKLEY,

Mr. THOMAS EGERTON, his brother.

The LADY ALICE EGERTON.

The first scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters.

Spirit. Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot 5
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants, 10
Amongst the énthroned gods, on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire

To lay their just hands on that golden key
 That opes the palace of Eternity:
 To such my errand is, and, but for such, 15
 I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
 With the rank vapors of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
 Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
 Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove, 20
 Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
 That like to rich and various gems inlay
 The unadornèd bosom of the deep;
 Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
 By course commits to several government, 25
 And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
 And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
 The greatest and the best of all the main,
 He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
 And all this tract that fronts the falling sun 30
 A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
 Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
 An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
 Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
 Are coming to attend their father's state, 35
 And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way
 Lies through the pérplexed paths of this drear wood,
 The nodding horror of whose shady brows
 Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger,
 And here their tender age might suffer peril, 40
 But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
 I was despatched for their defence and guard.
 And listen why—for I will tell you now
 What never yet was heard in tale or song,

From old or modern bard, in hall or bower. 45

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe, 50
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmèd cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?).

This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed and his blithe youth, 55

Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields, 60

At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass, 65
To quench the drouth of Phœbus, which as they
taste

(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear, 70

Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before, 75

And all their friends and native home forget,
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
 Therefore, when any favored of high Jove
 Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star 80
 I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,
 As now I do. But first I must put off
 These my sky robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
 And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
 That to the service of this house belongs, 85
 Who with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song
 Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar
 And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
 And in this office of his mountain watch
 Likeliest and nearest to the present aid 90
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
 Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistening; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
 Now the top of heaven doth hold,
 And the gilded car of day 95
 His glowing axle doth allay
 In the steep Atlantic stream;
 And the slope sun his upward beam
 Shoots against the dusky pole,
 Pacing toward the other goal 100
 Of his chamber in the east.

Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
 Midnight shout and revelry,
 Topsy dance and jollity.
 Braid your locks with rosy twine, 105
 Dropping odors, dropping wine.
 Rigor now is gone to bed,
 And Advice with scrupulous head,
 Strict Age, and sour Severity,
 With their grave saws, in slumber lie. 110
 We that are of purer fire
 Imitate the starry choir,
 Who in their nightly watchful spheres
 Lead in swift round the months and years.
 The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove, 115
 Now to the moon in wavering morris move;
 And on the tawny sands and shelves
 Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves;
 By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
 The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim, 120
 Their merry wakes and pastimes keep.
 What hath night to do with sleep?
 Night hath better sweets to prove—
 Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
 Come, let us our rites begin! 125
 'T is only daylight that makes sin,
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
 Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
 Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
 Of midnight torches burns—mysterious dame, 130
 That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
 Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom
 And makes one blot of all the air—

Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
 Wherein thou ridest with Hecate, and befriend 135
 Us, thy vowed priests, till utmost end
 Of all thy dues be done and none left out,
 Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
 The nice morn on the Indian steep,
 From her cabined loophole peep, 140
 And to the telltale Sun descry
 Our concealed solemnity.
 Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
 In a light fantastic round.

The Measure.

Break off! break off! I feel the different pace 145
 Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
 Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
 Our number may affright—some virgin, sure,
 (For so I can distinguish by mine art)
 Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms, 150
 And to my wily trains. I shall ere long
 Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
 About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
 My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
 Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion 155
 And give it false presentments, lest the place
 And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
 And put the damsel to suspicious flight:
 Which must not be, for that's against my course.
 I, under fair pretence of friendly ends 160
 And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
 Baited with reasons not unplausible,

Wind me into the easy-hearted man
 And hug him into snares. When once her eye
 Hath met the virtue of this magic dust, 165
 I shall appear some harmless villager,
 Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
 But here she comes; I fairly step aside
 And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY enters.

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true, 170
 My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
 Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
 Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
 Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
 When for their teeming flocks and granges full 175
 In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
 And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
 To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
 Of such late wassailers; yet oh, where else
 Shall I inform my unacquainted feet 180
 In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
 My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
 With this long way, resolving here to lodge
 Under the spreading favor of these pines,
 Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side 185
 To bring me berries or such cooling fruit
 As the kind hospitable woods provide.
 They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
 Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
 Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain. 190
 But where they are, and why they came not back,

Is now the labor of my thoughts: 't is likeliest
 They had engaged their wandering steps too far,
 And envious darkness, ere they could return,
 Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night, 195
 Why should'st thou, but for some felonious end,
 In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
 That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
 With everlasting oil, 'to give due light
 To the misled and lonely traveller? 200
 This is the place, as well as I may guess,
 Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
 Was rife and perfect in my listening ear;
 Yet naught but single darkness do I find.
 What might this be? A thousand fantasies 205
 Begin to throng into my memory
 Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names
 On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
 These thoughts may startle well, but not astound, 210
 The virtuous mind that ever walks attended
 By a strongsiding champion, Conscience.—
 O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
 Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
 And thou unblemished form of Chastity, 215
 I see ye visibly, and now believe
 That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
 Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
 To keep my life and honor unassailed. 220
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
 I did not err, there does a sable cloud

Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove. 225
 I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
 I'll venture, for my new-enlivened spirits
 Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen 230
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale,
Where the lovelorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well, 235
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That liketh thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where, 240
Sweet Queen of Parley, daughter of the sphere,
So mayest thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
 Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment? 245
 Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air
 To testify his hidden residence.
 How sweetly did they float upon the wings

- Of silence through the empty-vaulted night, 250
 At every fall smoothing the raven down
 Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
 My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
 Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
 Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs, 255
 Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul
 And lap it in elysium. Scylla wept,
 And chid her barking waves into attention,
 And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
 Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense 260
 And in sweet madness robbed it of itself.
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
 I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
 And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder! 265
 Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
 Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
 Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song
 Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
 To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood. 270
- Lady.* Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
 That is addressed to unattending ears.
 Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
 How to regain my severed company,
 Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo 275
 To give me answer from her mossy couch.
- Comus.* What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darkness, and this leavy labyrinth.
Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering
 guides?
Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf. 280

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them. 285

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips. 290

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the labored ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.

I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill, 295
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots.

Their port was more than human, as they stood;
I took it for a faëry vision

Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colors of the rainbow live 300

And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place? 305

Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of starlight,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet. 310

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,

Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
 And every bosky bourne from side to side,
 My daily walks and ancient neighborhood;
 And if your stray attendance be yet lodged 315
 Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
 Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
 From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
 I can conduct you, lady, to a low
 But loyal cottage, where you may be safe 320
 Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
 And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
 With smoky rafters than in tapestry halls
 And courts of princes, where it first was named 325
 And yet is most pretended. In a place
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
 Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
 To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on. 330

Enter the TWO BROTHERS.

Elder Brother. Unmuffle, ye faint stars, and thou, fair
 moon,
 That wontest to love the traveller's benison,
 Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
 And disinherit Chaos that reigns here
 In double night of darkness and of shades. 335
 Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
 Though a rush candle from the wicker hole
 Of some clay habitation, visit us

With thy long levelled rule of streaming light, 340
 And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Second Brother.

Or, if our eyes

Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
 The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops, 345
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
 Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
 'T would be some solace yet, some little cheering,
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
 But oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister! 350
 Where may she wander now, whither betake her
 From the chill dew, amongst rude burrs and this-
 tles?

Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
 Leans her unpillow'd head fraught with sad fears. 355
 What if in wild amazement and affright,
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
 Of savage hunger or of savage heat?

Elder Brother. Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite

To cast the fashion of uncertain evils, 360
 For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,
 And run to meet what he would most avoid?
 Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
 How bitter is such self-delusion! 365

I do not think my sister so to seek,
 Or so unprincipled in virtue's book
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
 As that the single want of light and noise

(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not) 370
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts
 And put them into misbecoming plight.
 Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
 Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self 375
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
 Where with her best nurse, Contemplation,
 She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings
 That in the various bustle of resort
 Were all-to-ruffled and sometimes impaired. 380
 He that has light within his own clear breast,
 May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day;
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
 Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
 Himself is his own dungeon.

Second Brother. 'T is most true 385
 That musing meditation most affects
 The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
 Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
 And sits as safe as in a senate-house.
 For who would rob a hermit of his weeds, 390
 His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
 Or do his gray hairs any violence?
 But beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
 Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
 Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye 395
 To save her blossoms and defend her fruit
 From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
 You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
 Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den
 And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope 400

Danger will wink on opportunity
 And let a single helpless maiden pass
 Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
 Of night or loneliness it recks me not;
 I fear the dread events that dog them both, 405
 Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
 Of our unownèd sister.

Elder Brother. I do not, brother,
 Infer as if I thought my sister's state
 Secure without all doubt or controversy;
 Yet where an equal poise of hope and fear 410
 Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
 That I incline to hope rather than fear,
 And gladly banish squint suspicion.
 My sister is not so defenceless left
 As you imagine; she has a hidden strength 415
 Which you remember not.

Second Brother. What hidden strength,
 Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

Elder Brother. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength
 Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own;
 'T is chastity, my brother, chastity— 420
 She that has that is clad in complete steel,
 And like a quivered nymph with arrows keen
 May trace huge forests and unharbored heaths,
 Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
 Where, through the sacred rays of chastity, 425
 No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
 Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
 By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
 She may pass on with unblenched majesty, 430

Be it not done in pride or in presumption.
 Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
 In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
 Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaïd ghost
 That breaks his magic chains at curfew time, 435

No goblin, or swart faëry of the mine,
 Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
 Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
 Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
 To testify the arms of chastity? 440

Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
 Fair silver-shafted queen forever chaste,
 Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
 And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
 The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men 445
 Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the
 woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
 That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
 Wherewith she freezed her foes to cóngealed stone,
 But rigid looks of chaste austerity, 450
 And noble grace that dashed brute violence
 With sudden adoration and blank awe?

So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her, 455
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
 And in clear dream and solemn vision

Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape, 460
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,

And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
 Till all be made immortal. But when lust
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, 465
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,
 Imbodies and imbrutes till she quite lose
 The divine property of her first being.
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp 470
 Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
 Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
 As loath to leave the body that it loved,
 And linked itself by carnal sensuality
 To a degenerate and degraded state. 475

Second Brother. How charming is divine philosophy,
 Not harsh, and crabbèd, as dull fools suppose,
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,
 And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
 Where no crude surfeit reigns!

Elder Brother. List, list! I hear 480
 Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Second Brother. Methought so too. What should it be?

Elder Brother. For certain
 Either some one like us night-foundered here,
 Or else some neighbor woodman, or, at worst,
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows. 485

Second Brother. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again,
 and near!

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Elder Brother. I'll halloo.
 If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
 Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

Enter the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a shepherd.

That halloo I should know. What are you? Speak! 490

Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else!

Spirit. What voice is that?—my young Lord?—speak again.

Second Brother. O brother, 't is my father's shepherd, sure.

Elder Brother. Thyrsis—whose artful strains have oft delayed

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, 495

And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale?

How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram

Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,

Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?

How could'st thou find this dark sequestered nook? 500

Spirit. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,

I came not here on such a trivial toy

As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth

Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth

That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought 505

To this my errand, and the care it brought.

But, O my virgin Lady, where is she?

How chance she is not in your company?

Elder Brother. To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame,

Or our neglect, we lost her as we came. 510

Spirit. Ay, me unhappy! then my fears are true.

Elder Brother. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly shew.

Spirit. I'll tell ye; 't is not vain, or fabulous

(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance),

What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse, 515
 Storied of old in high immortal verse,
 Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
 And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell,
 For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood, 520
 Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
 Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
 Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries;
 And here to every thirsty wanderer

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup, 525
 With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast

Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
 Charactered in the face. This I have learnt 530

Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
 That brow this bottom glade, whence night by night
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
 Like stabled wolves or tigers at their prey,
 Doing abhorrèd rites to Hecate 535

In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.
 Yèt have they many baits and guileful spells
 To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
 Of them that pass unwitting by the way.

This evening late, by then the chewing flocks 540
 Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
 Of knot-grass dew-besprent and were in fold,
 I sat me down to watch upon a bank

With ivy canopied and interwove
 With flaunting honeysuckle, and began, 545
 Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,

To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
 Till Fancy had her fill. But, ere a close,
 The wonted roar was up amidst the woods
 And filled the air with barbarous dissonance; 550
 At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
 Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
 Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
 That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep.
 At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound 555
 Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes
 And stole upon the air, that even Silence
 Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
 Deny her nature, and be never more,
 Still to be so displaced. I was all ear, 560
 And took in strains that might create a soul
 Under the ribs of Death. But oh, ere long
 Too well did I perceive it was the voice
 Of my most honored Lady, your dear sister!
 Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear, 565
 And "O poor hapless nightingale," thought I,
 "How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly
 snare!"
 Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste;
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
 Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place 570
 Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
 (For so by certain signs I knew), had met
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
 The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey,
 Who gently asked if he had seen such two, 575
 Supposing him some neighbor villager.
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed

Ye were the two she meant. With that I sprung
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
 But further know I not.

Second Brother. O night and shades, 580
 How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
 Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
 Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
 You gave me, brother?

Elder Brother. Yes, and keep it still.
 Lean on it safely. Not a period 585
 Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
 Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
 Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,
 Virtue may be assailed but never hurt,
 Surprised by unjust force but not enthralled. 590

Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
 Gathered like scum and settled to itself, 595
 It shall be in eternal restless change
 Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
 The pillared firmament is rottenness
 And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's
 on!

Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven 600
 May never this just sword be lifted up,
 But for that damned magician, let him be girt
 With all the grisly legions that troop
 Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms 605
 'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,

And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spirit. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet and bold emprise, 610
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Elder Brother. Why prithee, shepherd, 615
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?

Spirit. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled 620
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit and hearken e'en to ecstasy, 625
And in requital ope his leathern scrip
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out. 630
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil.
Unknown and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon; 635

And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
 That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
 He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
 And bade me keep it as of sovran use
 'Gainst all enchantments, mildew-blast, or damp, 640
 Or ghastly furies' apparition.

I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
 Till now that this extremity compelled.
 But now I find it true; for by this means
 I knew the foul enchanter though disguised, 645
 Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
 And yet came off. If you have this about you
 (As I will give you when we go), you may
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall,
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood 650
 And brandished blade rush on him, break his glass,
 And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
 But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew
 Fierce sign of battle make and menace high,
 Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke, 655
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Elder Brother. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee
 And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS appears with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand
 Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster, 660
 And you a statue, or as Daphne was,
 Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast:
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
 Thou hast enmanacled while Heaven sees good. 665

Comus. Why are you vexèd, Lady? Why do you frown?
 Here dwell no frowns nor anger; from these gates
 Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
 That Fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
 When the fresh blood grows lively and returns 670
 Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
 And first behold this cordial julep here
 That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
 With spirits of balm and fragrant sirups mixed.
 Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone 675
 In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
 Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
 To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
 Why should you be so cruel to yourself
 And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent 680
 For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
 But you invert the covenants of her trust
 And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
 With that which you received on other terms,
 Scorning the unexempt condition 685
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
 That have been tired all day without repast
 And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
 This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'T will not, false traitor, 690
 'T will not restore the truth and honesty
 That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.

Was this the cottage and the safe abode
 Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
 These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me! 695
 Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
 Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
 With visored falsehood and base forgery,
 And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
 With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute? 700
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None
 But such as are good men can give good things,
 And that which is not good is not delicious
 To a well-governed and wise appetite. 705

Comus. O foolishness of men that lend their ears
 To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
 And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
 Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!
 Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth 710
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
 Covering the earth with odors, fruits, and flocks,
 Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
 But all to please and sate the curious taste?
 And set to work millions of spinning worms, 715
 That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired
 silk,
 To deck her sons. And that no corner might
 Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
 She hatched th' all-worshipped ore, and precious
 gems,
 To store her children with. If all the world 720
 Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
 Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,

Th' All-giver would be unthanked, would be un-
praised,

Not half his riches known, and yet despised,
And we should serve him as a grudging master, 725

As a penurious niggard of his wealth,

And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,

Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,

And strangled with her waste fertility,

The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with
plumes, 730

The herds would over-multitude their lords,

The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought
diamonds

Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,

And so bestud with stars, that they below

Would grow inured to light, and come at last 735

To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.

List, Lady, be not coy, and be not cozened

With that same vaunted name Virginity.

Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,

But must be current, and the good thereof 740

Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,

Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself.

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose

It withers on the stalk with languished head.

Beauty is nature's brag, and must be shown 745

In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,

Where most may wonder at the workmanship.

It is for homely features to keep home;

They had their name thence; coarse complexions,

And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply 750

The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.

What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
 There was another meaning in these gifts:
 Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet. 755

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
 In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
 Would think to charm my judgment as mine eyes,
 Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
 I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments, 760
 And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
 Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
 As if she would her children should be riotous
 With her abundance; she, good cateress,
 Means her provision only to the good, 765
 That live according to her sober laws.
 And holy dictate of spare Temperance,
 If every just man that now pines with want
 Had but a moderate and beseeeming share
 Of that which lewdly-pampered luxury 770
 Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
 Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
 In unsuperfluous even proportion,
 And she no whit encumbered with her store;
 And then the giver would be better thanked, 775
 His praise due paid, for swinish gluttony
 Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
 But with besotted base ingratitude
 Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on,
 Or have I said enow? To him that dares 780
 Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
 Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
 Fain would I something say, yet to what end?

Thou hast not ear nor soul to apprehend
 The sublime notion and high mystery 785
 That must be uttered to unfold the sage
 And serious doctrine of Virginité;

And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
 More happiness than this thy present lot.
 Enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric 790

That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.

Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence, 795

That dumb things would be moved to sym-
 patize,

And the brute earth would lend her nerves and
 shake,

Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear 800

Her words set off by some superior power;
 And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering
 dew

Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
 Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble, 805
 And try her yet more strongly.

Come, no more!

This is mere moral babble, and direct
 Against the canon laws of our foundation.
 I must not suffer this, yet 't is but the lees
 And settlings of a melancholy blood. 810

But this will cure all straight; one sip of this

Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.

Spirit. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?

O ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand, 815
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.

Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me, 820
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Meliboeus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn
stream. 825

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure.

Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enragèd stepdame Guendolen, 830
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.

The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearlèd wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall, 835
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to embathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,

And through the porch and inlet of each sense
 Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived, 840
 And underwent a quick immortal change,
 Made goddess of the river. Still she retains
 Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
 Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
 Helping all urchin blasts and ill luck signs 845
 That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
 Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals—
 For which the shepherds at their festivals
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream 850
 Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
 And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
 The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
 If she be right invoked in warbled song;
 For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift 855
 To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
 In hard besetting need. This will I try,
 And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song

Sabrina fair,
Listen, where thou art sitting 860
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair.
Listen for dear honor's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake, 865
Listen and save!

Listen and appear to us
 In name of great Oceanus.

By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace
 And Tethys' grave majestic pace, 870
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look
 And the Carpathian wizard's hook,
 By scaly Triton's winding shell
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell,
 By Leucothea's lovely hands 875
 And her son that rules the strands,
 By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet
 And the songs of Sirens sweet,
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
 And fair Ligea's golden comb, 880
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks,
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance
 Upon thy streams with wily glance,
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head 885
 From thy coral-paven bed,
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,
 Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen and save!

SABRINA rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.

By the rushy-fringed bank, 890
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of Turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays; 895
Whilst from off the waters fleet,
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,

*That bends not as I tread;
Gentle swain, at thy request* 900
I am here!

Spirit. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmèd band
Of true virgin here distressed 905
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblest enchanter vile.

Sabrina. Shepherd, 't is my office best
To help ensnarèd chastity:
Brightest Lady, look on me; 910
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy fingers' tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip, 915
Next, this marble venomèd seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour, 920
To wait in Amfitrite's bower.

SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.

Spirit. Virgin, daughter of Loctrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmèd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss 925
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills.
Summer drouth or singèd air

Never scorch thy tresses fair,
 Nor wet October's torrent flood 930
 Thy molten crystal fill with mud.

May thy billows roll ashore
 The beryl, and the golden ore.
 May thy lofty head be crowned
 With many a tower and terrace round, 935
 And here and there thy banks upon
 With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
 Let us fly this cursèd place,
 Lest the sorcerer us entice 940
 With some other new device.

Not a waste or needless sound
 Till we come to holier ground.
 I shall be your faithful guide
 Through this gloomy covert wide; 945
 And not many furlongs thence

Is your Father's residence,
 Where this night are met in state
 Many a friend to gratulate

His wished presence and, beside, 950
 All the swains that there abide
 With jigs, and rural dance resort.

We shall catch them at their sport,
 And our sudden coming there
 Will double all their mirth and cheer: 955

Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,
 But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle; then come in Country Dancers, after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT with the TWO BROTHERS and the LADY.

Song

Spirit. Back, shepherds, back! enough you play

Till next sunshine holiday.

Here be, without duck or nod,

960

Other trippings to be trod

Of lighter toes, and such court guise

As Mercury did first devise

With the mincing Dryades,

On the lawns and on the leas.

965

This second Song presents them to their FATHER and MOTHER.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,

I have brought ye new delight,

Here behold so goodly grown

Three fair branches of your own.

Heaven hath timely tried their youth,

970

Their faith, their patience, and their truth,

And sent them here through hard essays

With a crown of deathless praise,

To triumph in victorious dance

O'er sensual folly, and intemperance.

975

The dances ended, the SPIRIT epilogizes.

Spirit. To the ocean now I fly,

And those happy climes that lie

Where day never shuts his eye,

Up in the broad fields of the sky:

There I suck the liquid air

980

All amidst the gardens fair

Of Hesperus and his daughters three

That sing about the golden tree:

Along the crispèd shades and bowers

Revels the spruce and jocund Spring; 985
 The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
 Thither all their bounties bring;
 There eternal Summer dwells,
 And west winds with musky wing
 About the cedarn alleys fling 990
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
 Iris there with humid bow
 Waters the odorous banks that blow
 Flowers of more mingled hue
 Than her purpled scarf can show, 995
 And drenches with Elysian dew
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,
 Waxing well of his deep wound 1000
 In slumber soft, and on the ground
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
 But far above in spangled sheen
 Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
 Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced, 1005
 After her wand'ring labors long,
 Till free consent the gods among
 Make her his eternal bride,
 And from her fair unspotted side
 Two blissful twins are to be born, 1010
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
 But now my task is smoothly done:
 I can fly, or I can run
 Quickly to the green earth's end,
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend, 1015
 And from thence can soar as soon

To the corners of the moon.

Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue—she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime.
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

VII

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the author bewails a learned Friend unfortunately drowned in his Passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude

Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,

Compels me to disturb your season due,

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,

Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.

Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew

Himself to sing, and build the lofty rime.

He must not float upon his watery bier

Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,

Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.

Hence with denial vain and coy excuse;

So may some gentle Muse

With lucky words favor my destined urn,

And, as he passes, turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill;
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright 30
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long, 35
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose, 45
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows,
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,

Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream. 55
 Ay me! I fondly dream
 Had ye been there—for what could that have done?
 What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son, *at the*
 Whom universal Nature did lament, *Orpheus* 60
 When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
 His gory visage down the stream was sent,
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
 Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
 To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade, 65
 And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
 Were it not better done as others use,
 To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
 Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
 Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears, 75
 And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears,
 "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
 Nor in the glistening foil
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies, 80
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
 Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou, honored flood, 85
 Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
 But now my oat proceeds,
 And listens to the herald of the sea,
 That came in Neptune's plea. 90
 He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
 What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
 And questioned every gust of rugged wings
 That blows from off each beakèd promontory.
 They knew not of his story, 95
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
 That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed.
 The air was calm, and on the level brine
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100
 Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
 Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
 His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105
 Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
 "Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
 Last came, and last did go,
 The Pilot of the Galilean lake;
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:
 "How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
 Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115
 Of other care they little reckoning make,

Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
 A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least 120
 That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped,
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread,
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
 But that two-handed engine at the door 130
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
 That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues. 135
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers, 140
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
 The glowing violet, 145
 The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears;

Sadhuji m...

Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, 150
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
 For so, to interpose a little ease,
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled, 155
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world,
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160
 Where the great vision of the guarded mount
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth,
 And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
 Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more, 165
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore 170
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
 Through the dear might of him that walked the waves,
 Where other groves, and other streams along,
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
 There entertain him all the saints above,
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,
 That sing and, singing, in their glory move, 180

Remembering Lycid

And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;

Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good

To all that wander in that perilous flood.

185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,

While the still Morn went out with sandals gray;

He touched the tender stops of various quills,

With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;

And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,

190

And now was dropped into the western bay.

At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:

To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

VIII

TO MR. H. LAWES, ON HIS AIRS

HARRY, whose tuneful and well-measured song
First taught our English music how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas' ears, committing short and long,
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng, 5
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
To after age thou shalt be writ the man
That with smooth air couldst humor best our tongue.
Thou honor'st Verse, and Verse must lend her wing
To honor thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire, 10
That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

IX

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN
PIEDMONT

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans 5
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who having learnt the way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

X

ON HIS BLINDNESS

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5
My true account, lest he returning chide;
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts. Who best 10
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o’er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

NOTES

I—ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Milton began this Ode on Christmas Day, 1629. The odes on *The Passion* and *The Circumcision* were probably intended to accompany it. It is significant to find the poet selecting such themes already in his youth.

This Ode, or Hymn, the first of Milton's great poems, is a wonderful achievement both in its conception and lyrical quality for one so young, just twenty-one, and still at the University. Its careful elaboration is too marked; like *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, it was doubtless more or less of a set exercise, and the poet had not yet learned to perfect his art to the point where it conceals itself. The tendency in it, also, to the use of conceit, or extravagant metaphor, characteristic of the age, and of Cambridge particularly, is so marked that it has been called a piece of frozen Marinism (referring to the assumed influence of the Italian, Marini, in promoting such conceit). But, none the less, it is one of the most beautiful poems in the language. We cannot do better than to recall here Verity's fine appreciation of it. "Milton reveals here many of those qualities which have won for *Paradise Lost* a place apart in our literature. The *Hymn* is a foretaste of the epic. We have the same learning, full for the classical scholar of far-reaching suggestion: the same elevation and inspired enthusiasm of tone: even (to note a small but not valueless detail) the same happy device of weaving in the narrative names that raise in us a vague thrill of awe, a sense of things remote and great and mysterious: above all, the same absolute grandeur of style. No other English poet rivals Milton in a certain majesty of music, a dignity of sound so irresistible that the only thing to which we can compare it (and the comparison has been made a thousand times), is the strains of an organ. This command over great effects of harmony places *Paradise Lost* beyond

competition. It informs the best passages of Milton's prose-works. And of all the early poems none displays it so conspicuously as the *Nativity Ode*."

Lovers of English verse hold it in memory with that other transcendent poem on the Nativity by the ill-fated poet Crashaw—each so beautiful, though so different.

LINE 1-28.—The opening stanzas are in *rime royal*, (*a b a b b c c*), but with an Alexandrine, or six-foot iambic verse, in place of the usual five-foot verse in the last line. The *rime royal* owed its vogue, which extended throughout the sixteenth century, to Chaucer. Milton here follows Spenser's use of it in his *Four Hymns*.

5.—**sages**. The prophets.

6.—**deadly forfeit**. The penalty of death incurred through Adam and removed by Christ.

10.—**wont**. Was wont; past tense of *won*, dwell, be accustomed—an archaism.

11.—**midst**. The middle (one); a Spenserian use.

15.—Compare *Paradise Lost*, I, 6. The nine Muses were the goddesses of poetry, music, painting, and other "arts." They were supposed to inspire those who invoked their aid in the pursuit of these arts; hence, the invocation of the "Muse" by modern poets, as, in the present case, an imagined Muse of sacred song.—**vein**. Humor, spirit; here, the spirit or mental state in which "song," or poetry, is composed.

19.—**team**. The horses which drew the chariot of Phœbus.

20.—**print**. Of the hoofs of the "Sun's team."

21.—**spangled**. Distributed over and spangling the heavens.

23.—**wizards**. The wise men, or Magi; see Matthew, ii, 2.

24.—**prevent**. Come before, anticipate; the etymological meaning.

28.—See Isaiah, vi, 6-7.—**secret**. In a place apart.

29.—The metre here changes to a stanza devised by Milton made up of "tail rime," *a a b c c b*, with lines of three and five stresses, followed by a couplet consisting of a four-stressed line followed by an Alexandrine. Note that in some lines the first foot consists of a stressed syllable only.

33.—**gaudy trim**. Bright or gay attire, *i. e.*, that of summer.

36.—**paramour**. Lover.

39.—**guilty**. As being under the curse of sin. Notice the over-elaborate metaphor, or "conceit." See *Comus*, 197, *n.*

41.—**pollute**. Polluted; an adaptation of Latin *pollutus*. Of many such adaptations in Elizabethan and seventeenth-century English, one or two remain to-day—*situate, consecrate*.

47.—**olive**. The olive is associated with peace because of the twig brought back by the dove after the Flood.

48.—**the turning sphere**. An allusion derived from the Ptolemaic theory of the heavens. See *Comus*, 2, *n*.

50.—**turtle wing**. The wing of the turtle-dove. The turtle-dove typifies meekness and undying loyalty.

51.—**myrtle**. The myrtle was sacred to Venus, but there is no obvious explanation of its association with peace.

56.—**hookèd**. With wheels armed with blades like scythes or reaping-hooks. Chariots thus armed were used by various ancient peoples.

64.—**whist**. Hushed. Milton imitates *The Tempest*, I, ii, 378, 379,—“Court’sied when you have, and kist the wild waves whist”; *i. e.*, “When you have court’sied and have caused by your kissing the wild waves to become whist.” *Whist*, originally an interjection, meaning “be quiet,” came to be used as a participle. Compare *hist*, *Il Penseroso*, 55.

68.—**birds of calm**. The halcyons, or king-fishers, during whose breeding period the sea, according to classical belief, remained calm. Compare the phrase “halcyon days,” *I. Henry VI*, I, ii, 131.

71.—**one way**. Toward the Saviour’s birthplace.—**influence**. The power of the stars, according to the pseudo-science of astrology, by which power they are enabled to shape the characters and fortunes of men and to determine events. Here the power is a tribute to the infant Saviour.

74.—**Lucifer**. The morning star, or, as the word implies, “light-bringer.”

81.—**as**.—As if.

84.—**axletree**. Milton frequently uses the classical conception of the sun as a chariot. Compare *Comus*, 95, 96.

85.—**lawn**. A pasture, upland; originally a clear space in a wood.

86.—**or ere**. Here “before” merely, though properly meaning “before ever,” an emphatic form not needed here.

87.—**simply**. In simple country fashion.

88.—**than**. Obsolete form of *then*.

89.—**the mighty Pan**. Pan was the god of the shepherds, and, later, the god of fruitful Nature, the productive universe. Mil-

ton here refers to Christ under this name, following Spenser, as the great shepherd, the omnipotent one. The term *mighty* is not intended, however, as sometimes explained, to set off the "mighty" Pan, Christ, as against the pagan deity.

91, 92.—A reference to the pastoral convention of the shepherd's life. See the prefatory note to *Lycidas* below.

92.—**silly**. Innocent, harmless; its original sense.

95.—**strook**. Obsolete preterit and participle of *strike*.

97.—**noise**. Originally either inharmonious or, as here, harmonious sound.

98.—**took**. Charmed, bewitched; an obsolete sense.

100.—**close**. Cadence, fall.

102, 103.—The "hollow round" is the sphere of the moon; see *Il Penseroso*, 88. The moon is called here by one of the names of Artemis or Diana, goddess of the moon as Apollo or Phœbus is god of the sun. The name is derived from Mount Cynthus in Delos, their reputed birthplace. Cf. *Comus*, 441, *n*.

103.—**region**. A part of the universe; here, specifically, that of the air (as in our "upper regions of the air").

106.—**its**. Used only three times by Milton; here and in *Paradise Lost*, I, 254; IV, 813. This new form of the neuter genitive had not yet wholly ousted the original *his*.—**last fulfilling**. Final completion or fulfilled end, heaven and earth now seemingly made one.

107, 108.—The idea of the "music of the spheres," the divine harmony of the universe under law, is a favorite one with Milton. See l. 125, *n*., and *Arcades*, 68-72.

108.—**union**. Trisyllabic. See for this and similar cases, *Comus*, l. 298, *n*.

110.—**globe**. An orb or sphere, a compact whole.

114.—**displayed**. Unfolded; the etymologic meaning.

116.—**unexpressive**. Not to be expressed or described.

119.—**Sons of Morning**. The morning stars; see Isaiah, xiv, 12. The stanza is based on Job, xxxviii, 4-11.—**sung**. A number of preterit forms current in Milton's time are no longer good usage.

120, 121.—Note the rime. Milton here (see also *L'Allegro*, 101, 102) used the Southern (Kentish) pronunciation *gret*.

125.—Milton drew from Plato the beautiful conception of Pythagoras, of the "music of the spheres"; namely, the nine crystal spheres (see *Comus*, 2, *n*.) in which the heavenly bodies were set, having each its siren who, as the sphere revolved, sang

a characteristic note, these notes blending in harmony usually unheard (hence the force of l. 127), but now for once (l. 125) to "bless our human ears."

130.—**organ.** Milton's favorite instrument.

131.—**ninefold.** Of the nine spheres.

132.—**consort.** Concord, harmony.

135.—**Age of Gold.** The Golden Age when Saturn reigned, and man lived in innocence and peace without labor.

136.—**speckled.** That is, with the marks of disease. Compare *leprous*, l. 138.

140.—**mansions.** Used in its etymologic sense of "abiding-places."

141-143.—In reference to Astræa, *i. e.*, Justice, leaving the earth when the Golden Age ended, together with Pudicitia, to return when the Golden Age should return.

146.—**tissued.** Woven like silver or golden tissue.

155.—**ychnained.** The *y* is the remnant of the A. S. participial prefix, *ge*, still retained in German; an archaism imitated from Spenser.—**sleep.** The sleep of death.

157.—See Exodus, xix, 16-20; Thessalonians, 13-16.

163.—**session.** The technical word for the sitting of a court. Trisyllabic like *union* above.

168.—**The Old Dragon.** Satan. See Revelation, xii, and xx, 2.

172.—**swinges.** Causes to swing, swings or lashes with violence.

173*ff.*—Milton uses the tradition that at Christ's birth the pagan deities left the earth and the pagan oracles became dumb.

174.—**hideous.** Causing terror; not as to-day, shocking, repulsive.

178.—**Delphos.** More usually *Delphi*.

184.—In reference to the *genii loci* (l. 186) or local divinities of the classic mythology.

188.—**Nymphs.** See *Comus*, 422, *n.*

191.—**Lars and Lemures.** The *Lares* were spirits of dead ancestors worshipped by the Romans on "the holy hearth," the *Lararia* where their images were kept. The *Lemures* were spirits of evil men, who came at night from their graves to trouble the living, and required propitiation.

194.—**Flamens.** The priests of the Romans.—**quaint.** Strange or curious; a sense now obsolete.

195.—The sweating of statues is frequently referred to by the ancients as a portent.

197.—**Peor**. Baal-Peor, a title of the chief male god of the Phœnician and Canaanitish nations (Numbers, xxv, 18, xxxi, 16).—**Baalim** (bā'-a-lim). Plural of Baal, Lord, used to denote the gods of these nations in general.

199.—**twice-battered god**. Dagon. See 2. Samuel, v, 3, 4.

200.—**Ashtaroth**. The chief female deity of the Phœnicians, and the same as Astarte, Istar, and Aphrodite, typified by the moon among the Phœnicians, and represented with the horns of the crescent moon. See 204, *n*. The titles "heaven's queen and mother" belong properly to Cybele and Juno (Verity).

203.—**Lybic Hammon**. Ammon, god of oracles in upper Egypt, here called *Lybic* as worshipped in the Libyan Desert, was represented as a ram with horns, typifying power; hence the phrase "shrinks his horn."

204.—**Thammuz** (in the derived Greek myth, the human youth, Adonis, beloved by Aphrodite, the Greek Ashtaroth) was the sun-god of the Phœnicians. He was killed by a wild boar in Lebanon, according to the myth, and brought back by Ashtaroth from the lower world. At the festivals at Byblos in his honor (held yearly at the time of the reddening of the waters of the river Adonis, a local phenomenon ascribed to the blood of Thammuz flowing afresh) women lamented his death, and then turned to rejoice over his resurrection. Compare Ezekiel, viii, 14, and *Paradise Lost*, I, 446.—**Tyrian**. Of Tyre, *i. e.*, Phœnician.

205.—**Moloch**. A god of the Canaanites to whom children were offered as burnt sacrifices. According to a Rabbinical tradition, of apparently no truth, the children were placed in his arms and thence fell into the flames. Milton could read of "burning idol" in Sandys's *Travels*, where the idol is described as of brass, filled with fire, whose heat burned to death the sacrifices placed in its arms, while "lest their lamentable shrieks should sad the hearts of their parents, the priests of Moloch did deaf their ears with the continual clang of trumpets and timbrels."

211.—**brutish**. As worshipped under the form of animals.

212.—**Isis**. The goddess of the earth.—**Orus**. Horus, god of the sun.—**Anubis**. Son of Osiris, who guided souls in the lower world before Osiris for judgment.

213.—**Osiris**. The chief god of the Egyptians who became identified with Apis and was worshipped under the form of the Sacred Bull, the Apis, kept in the temple of Serapis at Memphis.

215.—**unshowered.** Referring to the fact that Egypt has no rain.

217.—Osiris was put to death by his brother Set, who, having made a richly decorated chest, exactly adapted to Osiris's figure, offered it at a banquet to the person whom it would fit. Osiris, when he lay down within it, was caught and thrown into the Nile. Milton here uses Plutarch's treatise on Isis and Osiris (Osgood). Osiris finally became ruler of the lower regions and judge of the souls of men.

220.—**sable-stolèd.** In sable or black robes. The *stola* of the Romans was a long robe for women. In modern English use, it is a black or embroidered band worn by clergymen about the neck and hanging down over the surplice.

223.—**eyn.** The archaic plural with *-en* of *eye*.

226.—**Typhon.** A huge monster of classical mythology, human above, but with his thighs folded with serpents. In battle with the gods, he was slain by Zeus. Milton evidently, following Plutarch, identifies Typhon with Set, the brother and enemy of Osiris.

228.—As Masson notes, the "snaky twine" suggested the image of Hercules in the cradle strangling the serpents, which Milton applies to the infant Christ.

229.—A pure conceit, grotesque in its suggestion to modern taste. See *Comus*, 197, *n*.

232.—In figurative reference to the belief that ghosts may not walk after dawn, being "fettered" by their "magic chains." See *Comus*, 435, *n*.

234.—**several.** Separate.

236.—**night-steeds.** The steeds of the chariot of night. See *Comus*, 553, *n*.—**moon-loved maze.** Winding or interwoven dance, beloved of the moon.

240.—**youngest-teemèd.** Youngest, or latest, born.

242.—A conceit, not a reference to the parable of the Ten Virgins.

243.—**courtly.** That has become a court.

244.—**bright-harnessed.** In bright harness, or armor.

II—ON SHAKESPEARE. 1630

The date is fixed by the title in the edition of 1645. It first appeared in the Second Folio of Shakespeare, 1632. Milton might well dedicate this beautiful tribute to a poet to whom, as noted above, he owed almost as much as he did to Spenser.

Title. The title in the edition of 1645 is "On Shakespear, 1630." In the Second Folio it reads, "An epitaph on the admirable dramatic poet W. Shakespeare."

1.—**What needs.** What need hath my Shakespeare . . . of the labor, etc. *What=why, for what purpose*, is frequent in this idiom in Shakespeare.—**Shakespeare.** Milton spells the name without the final *e*. Many variant spellings of the poet's name are found, but the weight of testimony is heavily in favor of Shakespeare.

4.—**star-pointing.** The *y* is the participial prefix, as in *yclept*. See note on the *Nativity Ode*, 155. Milton, to whom it is merely a poetic archaism, does not hesitate to use it with a present participle. The sense is "pointing to the stars."

8.—**livelong.** "Lasting" in the Second Folio.

10.—**easy numbers.** Shakespeare's facility in composition is attested by Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*, and in the preface to the First Folio by his fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, its editors (Masson). Milton's art was, on the contrary, "slow-endeavoring."

11.—**unvalued.** Invaluable.

12.—**Delphic.** Oracular (as if uttered at Delphi).

13.—**our fancy of itself bereaving.** Shakespeare, addressing our fancy, bereaves us of it through "our wonder and astonishment," and so we are made marble and his monument; a true conceit (see *Comus*, 197, *n.*), and one frequently used, in its general idea (that of a person so transfixed forever by an emotion as to become its lasting memorial), by Elizabethan poets. Its specific application here is a variation of the famous Latin phrase "*monumentum aere perennius*," "a monument more lasting than bronze," often paraphrased by modern poets, and indeed, more than once, in tributes to Shakespeare.

III—ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

The date is 1631. Note, in reference to Milton's long period of preparation, his anxious self-examination, his doubt as to the seasonable maturing of his powers, which appears in this sonnet, as well as the proud humility and sincere piety of the closing reflection.

4.—**shew'th.** Note the pronunciation as riming with *youth*, *truth*.

IV—L'ALLEGRO

Milton probably wrote *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* at Horton in 1632 or 1633. They seem in their subject, incidental references, and style a natural expression of his life there and his stage of poetic development at that time. No manuscript of them is in existence. They appear first in the *Poems* of 1645.

Milton pictures in these two poems the pleasures of life—true pleasures of an innocent kind—as they severally appeal to two contrasted temperaments, or to contrasted moods of one person. [On the one hand is *L'Allegro*, the man of joyous, active temperament, delighting in the gayety and brightness of life. On the other hand is *Il Penseroso*, the man whose mind is contemplative, meditative, tinged with the musing soberness or half-sadness which others before Milton had sung as in itself a pleasure.] One must guard against reading into these poems, with various critics, any definite moral purpose—that *L'Allegro* pictures the careless and thoughtless person, and *Il Penseroso* one in whom the impulse to effective action is lost in reflection. It seems less likely that Milton meant to picture two persons than two contrasted moods he recognized in himself, in one of which the contemplative life, in the other the active enjoyment of life, seemed to possess an exclusive appeal. And with still more certainty, one must guard against reading into them, even remotely, any allegory of the contrasted ideals of life of the Cavalier and the Puritan. Had such an idea been present in Milton's mind, he would have contrived, even though speaking as *L'Allegro*, to hold up to reprobation the reckless pursuit of pleasure so general among the Cavaliers.

The suggestion for both poems seems unquestionably to have been the *Abstract of Melancholy* prefixed to Burton's wonderful book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. This is a "Dialogos," in which the pleasures and pains of the melancholy temperament are set forth in contrast, and might readily suggest the idea of companion poems in which not merely the contrasted moods of the melancholy man should be set forth, but active pleasures as contrasted with contemplative. This fact, if given due weight, will dispose of the theories sometimes urged in regard to the priority of *Il Penseroso*, and the various conclusions made to hang thereupon, such as that Milton plainly favors *Il Penseroso*, that he was *Il Penseroso*, and that he intended to point a moral

in favor of one as against the other. Further, in respect to sources, *Il Penseroso* borrows from Burton's *Abstract*, and also shows the influence of the beautiful song, "Hence, all you vain delights," included in Fletcher's play, *The Nice Valor*, but possibly, if tradition is correct, written by Fletcher's twin-soul Beaumont. Padelford has endeavored to show that Milton borrowed some of the details of *L'Allegro* from a poem in *Tottel's Miscellany* (second edition), "The sun, when he had spread his rays," but the correspondences seem merely accidental.

After reading the poems through so as to get an impression of each as a unity, compare them in detail to observe the balance of form. Both open with a characteristic invocation, and close with a like affirmation; the main portions, listing the sights and sounds, occupations and pleasures, characteristic of the two attitudes toward life, are in careful balance. In considering these abstracts, touching lightly and quickly on one thing after another, the reader must not be led astray by the somewhat curious over-zeal of certain of the older critics, who urged the view that Milton was depicting either an actual or an ideal day, such as might be spent by the joy-loving or the contemplative man. He merely takes up these sights and sounds, occupations and pleasures, in a natural order, as they might be seen or enjoyed at one time or another.

After the reader has learned to appreciate the fresh and charming beauty of the two poems in imagery and phrasing, it is worth noting, in illustration of the character and quality of Milton's genius, that they were plainly, as the set character of their themes and careful balance of subject and detail indicate, a deliberate exercise in poetical composition, rhetorically conceived and carried out. None the less they attain to a beauty that is not merely rhetorical. Milton's poetic energy, the exquisite sensitiveness of his taste, were such as to impart to themes essentially rhetorical in conception something of the magic of true poetry.

Title. The title (pronounced *lal-lā'-gro*) is Italian, and means "The joyful, or happy, [person]." There is no way of determining whether Milton gave the two poems their Italian titles before or after his visit to Italy.

1.—Milton adds Melancholy to the offspring of Midnight (Death, Sleep, Nemesis, etc.) in classical mythology. Like his master, Spenser, and other Renaissance poets, he modified, or

added to, classical mythology when he pleased. Compare *Il Penseroso*, 23.

2.—**Cerberus**. The monster in the form of a dog with three heads that guarded the portals of Hades.

3.—**Stygian**. Of the Styx, or in Hades. The Styx was one of the four fabled rivers of Hades.

5.—**uncouth**. Originally "unknown," hence, as here, unfamiliar, strange, inspiring dread; also (now only) rough and untrained in appearance or demeanor.

6.—**brooding**. The sense is "pondering sullenly," but with suggestion of the physical sense of covering eggs or fostering a brood.

7.—**night-raven**. Like the "night-crow," any bird of ill omen that cries at night,—the night-owl, night-heron, or night-jar. Compare N. E. D.

10.—**dark Cimmerian**. Covered by "Cimmerian" darkness, the darkness of the mythical country of the Cimmerii on the western ocean, perpetually shrouded in black mists.

11.—**free**. Properly "of noble birth," but used as an indefinite term of commendation.

12.—**yclept**. Called; past participle of the obsolete *clepe*, call, with the participial prefix *y* (A.S. *ge*, Ger. *ge*). See *Nativity Ode*, 155, *n*.—**Euphrosyne** (eu-phros'-i-nè). One of the Three Graces. The name means "of happy mind," "cheerful," hence l. 13.

14-16.—Zeus and one of several goddesses are usually regarded as the parents of the Graces. The alternative, ll. 17-24, is apparently his own invention.—**at a birth**. At one birth.

15.—**two sister Graces** Aglaia and Thalia.

16.—See *Comus*, 54, 55, *n*.

19.—**Zephyr**. The west wind and harbinger of spring.—**Aurora**. The goddess of dawn. Verity suggests that Ben Jonson in the *Penates* makes Aurora the companion of Favonius or Zephyr.

20.—Milton imagines Aurora to go forth for flowers on May-day, in accordance with the English custom.

24.—**buxom**. Blithe and happy. Originally, "willing to bow to, or obey, others' wishes," hence "good-natured," hence through "jolly," to "vigorous, plump," as to-day.—**debonair**. Amiable.

26.—Note the series of personifications as characteristic of Milton.

27.—**Quips.** Witty (usually sharp) speeches.—**Cranks** Sayings containing an amusing turn of fancy and humor.—**wanton Wiles.** Tricks of manner and speech to attract, used “wantonly” or without restraint.

28.—**Becks.** A sign that beckons.—**wreathèd Smiles.** Smiles that wreath the features in curves.

29.—**Hebe.** The goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods.

32.—A verbal borrowing from Phineas Fletcher’s *Purple Island*, IV, 131: “Here sportful Laughter dwells, here ever-sitting, Defies all lumpish griefs, and wrinkled care.”

33, 34.—Compare *The Tempest*, IV, i, 46.—“Each one, tripping on his toe.”

34.—**fantastic.** Following the guidance of fancy.

36.—Referring to the fact that liberty is peculiarly cherished by dwellers in the mountains.

40.—**unreprovèd.** Not meriting reproof; innocent.

41.—The list of the pleasures that L’Allegro delights in here begins. L’Allegro is roused by the lark which sings till the dawn rises and comes (it is the dawn that comes to the window), “in spite of sorrow” (with its power of bringing cheer and banishing the heavy thoughts of night) and bids him good-morrow.

48.—**eglantine.** Properly the same as sweetbrier, but also used for several other roses.

55.—**hoar.** Gray; not, as sometimes explained, “covered with hoar-frost.”

57.—**not unseen.** Pointless, unless the balance is noted with *Il Penseroso*, 65, who walks “unseen.” *L’Allegro* does not avoid company.

58.—American students should note the characteristic features of the English country-side.

60.—**state.** The stately progress or passage of a sovereign or other great personage.

62.—**livery.** A prescribed dress for attendants, especially servants, but not so definitely associated with servants’ dress in Milton’s time as now.

67.—**tells his tale.** Counts the tale or known number of his flock. This is unquestionably the correct interpretation as over against the idea of love-making.

70.—**landskip.** Landscape; a form occasionally used to-day.

71.—**russet.** Reddish-gray.—**lawns.** Pastures.—**fallows.** Ploughed land left uncropped to grow fertile.

- 74.—**laboring**. In labor, as about to produce rain.
- 78.—**bosomed**. Enclosed as if nestled in the bosom.—**tufted** In clumps; a use now obsolete.
- 79.—**lies**. Lives or dwells; or better, “makes her residence.”
- 80.—**cynosure**. See *Comus*, 341, 342, *n*.
- 83.—Conventional names of shepherds in pastoral verse, as Phillis and Thestylis below are of shepherdesses.
- 85.—**messes**. Dishes of food as prepared for the table.
- 87.—**bower**. See *Comus*, 45, *n*.
- 90.—**tanned**. Dried in the sun. The verb is omitted in the line, as being sufficiently suggested in l. 87.
- 91.—**secure**. Without care or fear—the etymological sense.
- 92.—**invite**. Invite a visit by the pleasures they offer.
- 94.—**rebecks**. An early instrument of the violin family with two or, later, three or four strings. The violin had in Milton’s time displaced it. In country hamlets it would still be used.
- 98.—**sunshine**. Sunshiny. Compare *Comus*, 959.
- 100.—Ale mulled and spiced. “Nut-brown” is a traditional term of praise for ale.
- 101, 102.—Milton pronounced *feat* like *fate*. *Eat* is merely a spelling for the preterit, pronounced, as now, *ate*.
- 102.—**Mab**. Queen Mab, queen of the fairies. Similar references to Queen Mab are frequent in fairy literature and incidental allusions in the seventeenth century. See *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, and the following passage (cited first by Masson) in Ben Jonson’s masque of *The Satyr*:

This is Mab, the Mistress Fairy,
That doth nightly rob the dairy,
And she can hurt or help the churning,
As she please without discerning. . . .
She that pinches country wenches
If they rub not clean their benches,
And with sharper nails remembers
When they rake not up their embers;
But, if so they chance to feast her,
In a shoe she drops a tester.

103, 104.—A tale having been told of Mab’s eating the junkets, “she” (one of the “maids”) tells her story, and “he” (one of the “youths”) tells his. This demonstrative use of personal pronouns, without definite antecedents, not infrequent in Middle English, is rare in Modern English, and is here due to the exigencies of Milton’s chosen method of brief reference, which further causes the difficulty in ll. 104, 105, taken up below.

103.—Pinching and pulling was the punishment, or reminder, often inflicted upon mortals by fairies. Compare the passage above, and *Merry Wives*, V, v.

104, 105.—“And he”—the one who was misled by the Friar’s lantern (and presumably tells about it)—tells also how “the drudging goblin,” etc. (The reading of the text is that of 1645, usually, and rightly, retained by editors.) Milton felt the awkwardness of the passage, and in the edition of 1673 amends l. 104 to “And by the Friar’s lantern led,” thereby throwing out “he,” and linking all the stories with a single story-teller, “she,” of l. 103. This has its own awkwardness in the abrupt introduction of a new verb, “tells,” and it seems better to keep the original reading, in spite of the somewhat forced ellipsis of l. 104 paraphrased above.—*friar’s lantern*. This allusion has been cleared up by Kittredge in “The Friar’s Lantern and Friar Rush,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 15 (8), 415. Milton evidently refers to the will-o’-the-wisp, which becomes, in folk-lore, the Jack-o’-the-Lantern, a malicious sprite who, by his light, leads wayfarers astray in marshy places. Kittredge shows the strong probability, owing to the part friars play in popular stories (a number in Germany carry lights), that a friar with a lantern may have become one of the many forms in which the will-o’-the-wisp appears in popular mythology.

105.—*the drudging goblin*. Robin Goodfellow, or Hobgoblin, a house elf, who might either play tricks, or, if properly treated by the setting forth of a cream bowl, might render most efficient service. Shakespeare’s Puck is a transformed Robin Goodfellow. Among various names he or similar sprites bear are: “Lob-lie-by-the-fire” (compare Mrs. Ewing’s tale of that title) and *brownie* (compare Miss Mulock’s *Adventures of a Brownie*).

110.—*lies*. The change of construction is justified by the vigor and vividness thereby gained.

114.—*matin*. Explained as a “morning note or song” in the dictionaries, the use starting with this passage. It would seem more probable that Milton used the word in its common sense of early morning service (matins being still often said), and used the singular through Shakespeare’s influence (*Hamlet*, I, v, 89) or merely for euphony.

117.—*then*. Not used literally, but to mark transition to another class of pleasures—after the country, the city.

120.—**weeds.** Garments; now used only specifically of mourning.—**triumph.** A public festivity as a pageant or tournament, especially the latter, as here.

122.—**rain influence.** That is, like that of the stars. See *Nativity Ode*, 71, *n.*

125.—**Hymen.** The god of marriage, conventionally represented as clad in a saffron robe, with a torch (not taper, as here) in his hand.

127.—**pomp.** A formal or solemn procession.

128.—**mask.** See prefatory note to *Comus* below.—**pageantry.** Pageants; scenes or tableaux displayed in public on festive occasions.

132.—Ben Jonson (1573–1637) represents the “classical” impulse, as Shakespeare does the “romantic.” He is famous chiefly for his “comedy of humors,” depicting special traits of character (called humors), intensified in single characters, and for his masques, and for his criticism. He was the first great English critic and, by his personal force, his erudition, and his own charmingly poetic and beautifully accurate verse, exercised, chiefly through personal intercourse, a most important influence on the younger poets of the seventeenth century and on the trend of poetry toward classicism.—**sock.** The low shoe worn by players of comedy in Greece; hence used to typify comedy, as the buskin, or high shoe, tragedy.

134.—It has been pointed out that this characterization of Shakespeare is far from apt, unless Milton means by “wood-notes wild” merely much the same as the “easy numbers” of his sonnet *On Shakespeare*. It is not just to argue that Milton grew to depreciate Shakespeare, as Verity suggests. He might well regard him as a marvel, and yet differ with him in respect to the proper form of tragedy and other matters of poetic art.

135.—**eating cares.** From Horace, *Odes*, I, xviii, 4.

136.—**Lydian airs.** Music in the Lydian mode was thought of by the ancients as soft and tender.

139.—**bout.** A turn or change.

145.—**Orpheus.** The wonderful singer and player in Greek myth who could draw beasts and even inanimate things after him by his music. His music led to the surrender of his dead wife Eurydice by Pluto on condition he should not look back as she followed, till both were out of Hades, a condition he broke, thus losing her forever.

V—IL PENSEROSO

[For preface, see *L'Allegro*, above.]

Title. Milton has been accused of error in using *penseroso* both as regards its form, the contention being that the proper form is *pensieroso*, and as regards the special sense assumed of one inclined to sober reflection, contemplation. In the Italian of his time, however, it did have both this form and meaning. The pronunciation is ēl pen-sā-rō'-sō.

1.—Verity suggests the influence of certain lines in Sylvester's *Henry the Great*:

Hence, hence, false Pleasures, momentary Joys;
Mock us no more with your illuding Toys,
. . . all World's-hopes as dreams do fly.

The student must not forget to note the close balance of structure with *L'Allegro*.

3.—**bested.** Help, avail, profit.

4.—**fixèd.** Not to be swayed easily; firm.—**toys.** Idle trifles.

6.—**fond.** Foolish; the etymological meaning.

10.—**pensioners.** Attendants (*e. g.*, the body-guard of a sovereign) on pension or regular pay.—**Morpheus.** One of the gods of dreams, and in stock poetical reference the god of sleep.

12.—It must be remembered that Milton is using Melancholy, in a temporary Elizabethan use, of a sober, pensive frame of mind, touched with sadness, but not unpleasantly.

14.—**hit.** Fall in, or agree, with; a metaphorical sense.

18.—**Memnon.** King of the Ethiopians, famed for his beauty (*Odyssey*, XI, 522). Milton may have imagined a sister like him or have known of a sister mentioned by Dictys Cretensis.

19.—**starred.** Placed among the constellations.—**Ethiop queen.** Cassiopeia. The Nereids ("Sea-nymphs") were avenged through a sea-monster sent by Poseidon to ravage Ethiopia. Andromeda, the daughter of Cassiopeia, was offered up to the monster, but was rescued by Perseus.

23.—**Vesta.** Goddess of the hearth. Saturn (l. 24), father of Jove and displaced by him and driven into exile, may here typify Solitude. Milton invents the union and parentage, and his meaning is not apparent. The simplest explanation would

be that Melancholy is the child of solitude and devotion to one's hearth as opposed to the preoccupations of the outer world. There may also be suggestion of Saturn's characteristic melancholy, but this is of a different sort, being morose, from that which Milton is praising.

25.—**Saturn's reign.** The Golden Age. See *Nativity Ode*, 135, *n.*

29.—**Ida.** Mount Ida in Crete.

30.—**fear of Jove.** Saturn devoured his children, all save Jove, who was removed and hidden in Crete, and through the gift of the thunderbolt by the giants, was able to overthrow his father.

33.—**grain.** Dye, or color (see *Comus*, 750, *n.*). It is not probable that Milton here intends the specific sense of scarlet (*grain* being used for cochineal), or a purple derived from it.

35.—**stole.** Here, a cloak, hood, or veil; compare *Nativity Ode*, 220.—**cypress lawn.** Crape. Cypress (so-called as originally brought from Cyprus) was different from lawn, though the fabrics were similar; the meaning is a crape thin like lawn.

39.—**commercing.** Holding commerce or intercourse.

43.—**sad.** Serious.

46.—**diet.** Dine. No mythological allusion is intended here; Milton uses "gods" to imply the highest beings.

48.—**Jove's altar.** On Helicon, referred to by Hesiod.

54.—See Ezekiel, x. According to mediæval theologians, the cherubim among the angels had as their peculiar property wisdom and contemplation of divine things.

55.—**hist.** Summon with a word (as "hist!") or gesture imposing silence in obedience. This rare use of *hist* as a verb starts with this passage.

56.—**Philomel.** The nightingale; so called from Philomela, sister of Procne, who was ravished by Tereus, Procne's husband, and her tongue cut out, upon which she was changed to a nightingale (in one account).

58.—Compare *Comus*, 251.

59.—The chariot drawn by dragons really belongs to Ceres, not Diana.

60.—**accustomed.** Perhaps, as Verity suggests, Milton was thinking of some special tree in the garden at Horton.

61.—The student should specially note this famous passage on the nightingale, a favorite theme with English poets from the Anglo-Saxon riddle to Keats's *Ode* and Matthew Arnold's *Philomela*.

74.—Note the special beauty, the magical quality of these lines, in evoking a picture realized through the senses both of sight and sound.

77.—Milton rarely gets as near prose as this.

83.—**bellman**. The night-watchman, who called the hours, often in a rime that closed with an invocation or blessing.

87.—**out-watch the Bear**. Watch till dawn, as the Bear never sets. The Greater and Lesser Bears are northern constellations, stars of which form what in America is more usually called the Dipper.

88.—**Hermes**. Hermes Trismegistus, a mythical Egyptian king, the reputed author of the Hermetic books on various subjects. The Hermetic books, parts of which have been handed down under that name, are really Neo-Platonist writings, of the fourth century of the school of Alexandria, on God, the Cosmos, and similar subjects, written in opposition to Hebrew and Christian theology. The name of Hermes is often called in by alchemists, astrologers, and magicians in the Middle Ages. Milton cites him probably merely as a great and obscure name, and not because of any personal familiarity with his assumed works.—**unsphere**. Call from its assigned sphere in the heavens. See *Comus*, 2, 3, *n*.

93-96.—**And of those demons**. *Tell* is understood after *and*, being implied in *unfold* above. The demons, or spirits, of fire, air, water, and earth, are respectively the Salamanders, Sylphs, Nymphs, and Gnomes. They belong to Neo-Platonist and mediæval mysticism and pseudo-science, not to Plato, particularly as regards the doctrine of their connection with the planets and the elements they inhabit. Verity cites Pope's amusing use of these spirits in *Rapè of the Lock*, I, 57-65.

97.—**gorgeous**. Clad in rich and glowing array, but implying splendor and majesty in general.

98.—**sceptred pall**. Royal mantle. The pall is the mantle worn by tragic actors.

99, 100.—A reference, in brief, to the chief Greek tragedies. These would be (as enumerated by Verity) for Thebes, the *Seven Against Thebes* of Æschylus, and the *Œdipus Rex* and *Antigone* of Sophocles; for Pelops's line, the *Oresteia* of Æschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* and two dramas on *Iphigenia* by Euripides; for the tale of Troy, the *Hecuba* and *Troades*.

100.—**divine**. Used of Troy, according to Newton, as built by the gods.

101, 102.—Not necessarily, as has been assumed, a reference to Shakespeare in particular.

102.—**buskined**. See *L'Allegro*, 132, *n*.

104.—**Musæus**. The son or pupil of Orpheus, here probably, as Verity notes, representing lyric verse.

105–108.—See *L'Allegro*, 145, *n*.

109–115.—Chaucer, to whom Milton's master, Spenser, owed so much. Chaucer had long been recognized as the father of English poetry, and Milton appropriately cites him in a reference designed to include by suggestion the great bards of all times and countries. The reference is to the *Squire's Tale*, a choice of special interest in view of the fact that it was only "half told," left unfinished, and of its strikingly romantic character. In the story, a knight visits the court of Cambinskan (the Cambuscan of Milton), the "Tartar king," and presents him with a horse of brass that will carry its owner wherever he wishes, and a sword that will cut anything and can heal any wounds it makes, and also gives to Canacee (Canace) a ring which enables the wearer to understand the speech of birds and the uses of all plants, and a mirror which gives warning of misfortune, enemies, and unfaithful lovers. Camballo and Algarsyfe are the Cambalo and Algarsyfe of Chaucer, Cambinskan's sons. The reference in l. 112 takes its point from Chaucer's reference to a fight for Canacee's hand.

113.—**virtuous**. Possessing virtues, or special properties.

116.—Milton is here thinking of Spenser and the Italian writers of epic romance, Ariosto, Tasso, and Boiardo.

118.—**tourneys**. Tournaments.—**trophies hung**. Arms or standards won in battle, hung up in token of victory.

121.—**pale**. Dim, faint, lacking in some special quality understood.

122.—**civil-suited**. In civil or simple dress, not "tricked and frounced" (l. 123).

123.—**tricked**. Tricked up with adornments.—**frounced**. With the hair curled.

124.—**Attic boy**. Cephalus, with whom Aurora, the goddess of dawn, fell in love.

125.—Essentially of the nature of a conceit, but saved by the beauty of the diction.

128.—**his**. See the *Nativity Ode*, 106, *n*.

130.—**minute drops.** Falling slowly at intervals as if of a minute. Compare "minute guns."

134.—**brown.** Dusky, dark in color,—the original sense.—**Sylvan.** The god of fields and forests.

135.—**monumental oak.** Like, or suggesting, a monument in its age, size, or strength. It is not impossible that Milton may have meant "used for making monuments or memorials."

145.—**consort.** Harmony; *cf. Nativity Ode*, 132.

147–150.—This passage has caused a great deal of difficulty. It is plain that the dream, displayed in an airy stream of lively portraiture (scenes, as vivid as if real, flowing after each other in its unsubstantial fabric), is "softly on my eyelids laid." But the exact meaning of "wave at his wings" seems impossible of precise definition. The phrase would seem to mean "let some dream waver and pass at the waving of the wings of sleep," the verb "wave" applying both to sleep and the dream.

154.—**Genius.** The special deity of a place in classic mythology.

156.—**cloister's pale.** A roofed walk, with the roof borne on one or both sides by a row (the "pale" of the verse) of pillars, at the side of a building, or connecting two buildings. They commonly form part of either college or religious buildings, but Milton here uses the cloister as typical of the colleges of a university, such as may be seen in Cambridge or Oxford.

157.—**embowèd roof.** The arched roof of a Gothic cathedral.

158.—**antic.** Covered with fantastic tracery or grotesque decoration, as the pillars of mediæval cathedrals commonly are. Verity rightly defends this reading as over against *antique*, old. He points out that the word in the editions Milton oversaw is spelled *antick* while in *L'Allegro*, 128, the spelling *antique* is used for the word meaning old. It may also be pointed out that the word is technical, does not mean "curious" or "strange" but describes a form of ornamentation peculiarly characteristic of cathedrals, and that it is in balance with "richly dight," or decorated, of the next line.—**massy proof.** So in the original editions, and better so retained, though *proof* is rather adjective than noun. If explained as a noun, *massy* is an adjective, and the phrase is elliptical for "of massy proof," that is, of proved or sufficient stability through their massiveness.

169.—**hairy gown.** The garment of hair-cloth worn by hermits in mortification of the flesh.

170, 171.—**spell of.** Study over, learn of.

VI—COMUS

TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

Milton's friend, the noted musician Henry Lawes, to whom he wrote a sonnet which is included in this volume, numbered among his pupils certain of the fifteen children of the first Earl of Bridgewater. When the Earl, who had been made Lord President of Wales in 1631, entered upon his duties in 1634, his induction into office was celebrated at the vice-regal residence, Ludlow Castle, by festivities, one feature of which was the masque of *Comus*. The music of *Comus* was written by Henry Lawes, and the text, at his request, by Milton. Milton's earlier masque, or rather fragment of one, *Arcades*, had been written in honor of the Dowager Countess of Derby, the mother of the Countess of Bridgewater—doubtless also at Lawes's request, though his connection with it is not actually known. This later and highly finished production was given on Michaelmas night, 1634. It was probably written early in that year. Lawes staged it, and took part in it in the character of the Attendant Spirit.

THE THEME OF "COMUS"

Milton devised a most happy idea for the main theme of the masque. Three of the children of the Earl, two brothers and their sister, "The Lady," are supposed to have become lost on their way to the festivities in their father's honor. The Lady falls into the power of an enchanter, but is finally released through the aid of the Attendant Spirit. These parts, the Elder and the Second Brother and the Lady, were taken respectively by the Earl's third but eldest surviving son, John, Viscount Brackley, twelve years old, his next younger brother, Thomas, and Lady Alice Egerton, the eleventh daughter, then not more than thirteen years old. Both the sons had acted before at Whitehall in Carew's *Cælum Britannicum*, and an elder sister, Lady Penelope, had acted at Court in Jonson's *Masque of Chloridia*. By Milton's plan the children were at the same time taking parts in the masque and acting in their own characters. In reading the play, it will be seen how effective this device is and how much pleasure it must have given their parents through Milton's use of it for purposes of compliment. There is no ground whatsoever for the story that an

actual incident of the children's becoming lost was used by Milton. Whether other gentlefolk took part in the principal characters is not known; very probably the bands of maskers were, as usual, in whole or in part gentlefolk. Professional performers were, no doubt, also included as usual.

PUBLICATION AND TEXT

Comus was first printed in 1637 by Lawes, with perhaps, as has been pointed out on the testimony of the motto on the title-page, some unwillingness on Milton's part; his name certainly is not given. In his dedication to Lord Brackley, Lawes says, "Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely and so much desired that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view." A letter of Sir Henry Wotton is also often cited in evidence of the impression it produced. The two editions of the *Poems* in Milton's lifetime, 1645 and 1673, contain it with separate title-page, and Milton's original draft at Cambridge and what is assumed to be the stage copy (the Bridgewater MS.) are extant. The present text is from the edition of 1645, collated with the facsimile of Lawes's edition of 1637, with reference, when necessary, to that of 1673, Todd's collation of the MSS., and the facsimile of the Cambridge MS. It may be added that the masque has been frequently performed in several much altered versions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the original version has at various times been given memorial performances, the last noted being in 1909. As a spectacle it could hardly fail to be beautiful, but those who have seen it say that it is far more effective dramatically than one might expect, the beauty of the verse making up for the slowness of the action.

"COMUS" AS A MASQUE

Comus is a masque with a dramatic theme developed somewhat more than is usual or at least common. To understand this, we must understand clearly what a masque is. The masque came from Italy, and was at first merely a dance, or series of dances, presenting an allegorical subject, performed by bands of maskers as a setting for a ball. In course of time

choruses, leading characters with individual songs, soliloquies, and dialogues, to present the story to better advantage, and a scenic background with elaborate changes and spectacular effects, were added. An addition of some interest artistically, though not important historically, due to the greatest of masque writers, Ben Jonson, was the inclusion within the masque proper of one or more antimasques—dances and choruses of a humorous, fantastic, or grotesque character, serving as a relief and foil to the beauty of the masque. It should be noted that while the part the leading characters took came necessarily to assume a certain importance, the dances and choruses, performed by bands of maskers, remained the essential and characteristic feature. Delightful, often marvelous, from the spectacular point of view, these entertainments must have been. Poet, musician, artist, were at rivalry in achieving the joint masterpiece—quarrelling, no doubt, not infrequently, like the master hands in this kind, Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. Extremely costly—several, it is known, cost the modern equivalent of \$60,000 and one \$400,000—masques remained what we should call private theatricals, given under professional direction and with professional aid, and were practically confined to the Court circle and the “Revels” of the four great legal societies, the Inns of Court.

Comus includes all the features of the masque, even the anti-masque, with full justice done the operatic features and dances; but it differs from the pure masque (like several others) in possessing a true dramatic plot, slight but still a plot, and in the fact that the development of this plot in the action of the leading characters is intended to hold the chief interest of the auditors. Milton, however, has been careful to keep the dramatic element in congruity with the operatic element, through its allegorical character and, indeed, its very slightness of theme. On the other hand, he has weighted the poem with a didactic purpose totally out of keeping, in the directness and vigor of its expression, with the spirit of the masque. Even the beauty of his diction cannot prevent one's feeling this in certain passages. Yet it remains true that he has contrived with admirable art a poetic drama that blends into masque, when the fitting moment comes, without loss of artistic unity.

SOURCES OF THE POEM

The sources of the poem call for a moment's attention, rather as a matter of interest than as helping us to its better understanding. The main theme of a sister entranced by a magician and released by her brothers, Milton found in George Peele's play, *The Old Wives' Tale*, printed in 1595. The debt appears plainly in points of detail, such as the fact that the magician learned his arts from his mother, that a potion is used to enthrall the sister, that aid is extended to the brothers in her release, in this case by an old man himself versed in magic. For the magician, Milton substituted *Comus*, a personification of sensual pleasure in late classical mythology, who derived his name apparently from the *κῶμος* or company of revellers, which celebrated festivities in honor of Dionysos or Bacchus, the god of wine, after the vintage. *Comus* had been used by Ben Jonson in the masque of *Pleasure Reconci'd*, but the character is there a burlesque allegorical portraiture of coarse gluttony and lust. Milton was undoubtedly influenced rather by the Latin play, *Comus*, 1608, of Hendrik van der Putten, reprinted at Oxford in the year Milton wrote his masque. The *Comus* of Puteanus much more closely resembles Milton's conception in the elements of dangerous charm and allurements, though it falls far short of it. Milton also adds enormously to the impressiveness of *Comus* by associating him with Circe and gifting him with like powers learned from his mother. The direct suggestion for this may have been derived from Browne's *Inner Temple Masque* (1614), the theme of which is the adventures of Ulysses on Circe's island. The idea was no less felicitous than bold: by thus associating his creation with the well-known myth, Milton at once endowed it for the spectator with a suitable background and atmosphere. Equally felicitous was his use of the English "Sabrina," the "nymph" of the Severn, as the means whereby the Lady is released from her enchantment. With Sabrina's story (for which see the *Notes*) Milton was familiar in the original, Geoffrey of Monmouth, as well as in Spenser, Drayton, and elsewhere; he told it himself later in his *History of Britain*. It is in this portion of *Comus* in which Sabrina appears that we find most unmistakably the influence of Fletcher's pastoral play, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, composed before 1625, which had recently been given in 1633, 1634. As

often noted, the whole masque is indebted in its spirit to this play, but Verity has rightly laid stress upon the special indebtedness attested by the identity of motive, namely, the strength of purity, and the fact that the disenchantment scene markedly betrays, in the conception of the nymph Sabrina, in its incidents, and in its lyric movement, the spell which Fletcher's genius exercised over Milton. A final reference must be made to Milton's continual indebtedness, here as elsewhere, to English poets and the classics, for imagery and phrasing, transmuted, however, to a special fitness and perfection of beauty unequivocally his own.

THE PLACE OF "COMUS" IN MILTON'S LIFE AND IN LITERATURE

In its relation to Milton's development, the poem bears witness to the fruition of his years of study and meditation at the University; in its expression of his ideal of the inviolable sovereignty of virtue, especially as centred in purity of word and thought; in the perfected refinement of taste it displays; and in the garnered wealth of thought and imagery drawn from his reading. In its relation to its time, the poem represents, on the one hand, the attitude of the more broad-minded Puritans who would not condemn the drama or music or dancing as evil in themselves, but only their abuse; and, on the other hand, it clearly typifies in Comus and his crew the evils in Court and State against which the Puritan set his face, and over which, as Milton felt, virtue, though delivered for a time into captivity, must ultimately triumph. But of greatest importance is the relation of the poem to the reader of to-day as a precious part of his inheritance in English literature. Critics have pointed out defects in the poem; for example, its lack of movement, its overweight of moral purpose, the frequent didacticism of its dialogue, and notably its lack of humor, a fundamental defect in Milton which, as Verity has truly said, more than aught else makes Milton Shakespeare's inferior. With these faults of the poem the reader need concern himself but little. What does concern him is the beauty of the verse, both in the dramatic and lyrical portions, and the beauty of the imagery and phrasing. These are a delight in themselves and afford also an admirable discipline in poetic taste. Moreover, the poem enforces the noblest ideals of virtue. Rare indeed is it that in a poem with such a theme, in passages demanding didactic

methods that are flatly at variance with poetic inspiration, and with the proper agencies of poetic expression, the sustained elevation of the poet is such that he hardly perceptibly flags in his level flight.

Title. In the MSS., Lawes's edition, and the 1645 and 1673 editions supervised by Milton, the play is merely entitled *A Masque*. The title of the 1645 edition, for example, reads, "A Mask of the same Author presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634, before the Earl of Bridgewater, then President of Wales. Anno Dom. 1645."

The Persons.—**Attendant Spirit.** The messenger of Jove sent to attend the Lady in her peril; an adaptation by the poet of the Christian conception of a guardian angel to his mythological setting.—**habit.** Dress.

Comus. The god of evil indulgence in pleasures of the sense; not merely an embodiment, as in Jonson, of reckless mirth and gluttonous revelry, but a tempter, gifted with arts of persuasion, and sinister as the master spirit of midnight rites. See the prefatory note.—**crew.** The god's troop of fellow revellers, partly transformed to beasts.

The Lady, First Brother, Second Brother. The Lady represents the virtue of innocence and purity, helpless in one sense as possessing no physical powers of defence, but triumphing through courage and the powerlessness of evil to harm, to injure pure virtue. The brothers typify virtue active and militant that, by heavenly guidance, puts the power of evil to flight. The allegory, plain enough, must not be strained too far; the story has interest as a story, and was primarily devised by Milton to provide little Lady Alice and her brothers with suitable parts. Because the play was written for them, and the parts they play are half make-believe, half in their real characters, Milton does not give them names different from their own. See the prefatory note above.

Sabrina. The nymph of the river Severn. In classical mythology, the nymphs were minor deities of trees, mountains, fountains, rivers, and the sea. Sabrina was a mortal made immortal and the goddess of the river, as told in ll. 825 ff. Ludlow, where the masque was given, is on a branch of the Severn, the Teme, but the goddess of the chief river is invoked to help the Lady—fittingly enough in any case, but also because of her romantic story.

The chief persons only are mentioned who "presented" (pre-

sented the play, or acted it). We know that Henry Lawes took the part of the Spirit, but not who represented Comus and Sabrina—both parts demanding special skill.

The first Scene. This has reference to the stage-setting rather than to the action of the play. Shifts of scene take place at ll. 658 and 957.

discovers. Discloses. A curtain or screen was probably used, the removal of which disclosed the scene on the stage.

descends or enters. The Spirit may either descend a slope, representing a hill at the back, a common device, or enter at the side. It is possible that an actual descent from above may be meant, as the character is a spirit and elaborate spectacular devices were used in the masques.

1-92. This speech is not a soliloquy, but a prologue addressed to the audience, just as at the close the children are presented from the stage directly to their parents. It corresponds in length to the closing scene (ll. 958-1023), which serves as an epilogue.

1.—**Jove's court.** Here in the heavens, not as in the earlier classical conception, on Olympus. The phrase "Jove's high court" occurs in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, II, ii, from which Milton drew.

2.—**mansion.** Abiding-place; the etymologic sense.—**those.** This demonstrative does not introduce a relative clause understood or, as sometimes explained, convey the sense of "well-known." It introduces two phrases, both referring to the same thing, one descriptive, the second explanatory of what the first refers to, an idiom more frequent and familiar in colloquial use, in phrases such as "that rascal of a servant," "those dogs of Saracens."

3.—**bright.** Of resplendent beauty, not merely resplendent—a traditional poetic use. Compare "Lady bright," l. 966.—**insphered.** A figurative use of the theory usually ascribed to Ptolemy, but developed by several Greek philosophers, which explained the motion of the heavenly bodies by supposing them fixed in concentric crystal spheres which turn about the earth, the relation of their axes and the manner in which they are geared within each other being most ingeniously assumed in certain developments of the system to account for the apparent motion of the bodies in the sky. Milton, here and elsewhere, represents these spheres as the abiding-places of celestial spirits or the spirits of the great dead. Cf. *Lycidas*, 125, *n.*

4.—*serene*. Frequently in Milton (as generally in Shakespeare) dissyllabic adjectives and participles which have their accent on the last syllable shift it to the first syllable, if they come before an accent. Possibly the accent was not shifted, but the two syllables pronounced with even stress. Compare for other examples, ll. 11, 37, 39 (*forlorn* before unaccented *and* retains its usual accentuation), 69, 200, 273. The line recalls the description in the *Odyssey*, VI, 42-45, of the abode of the gods.

5.—*dim*. Not, as explained by various editors, "dimmed by distance as seen from the Spirit's home." The word is used in its original sense, "not bright, shadowy, dark, dusky" (so frequently in Shakespeare, even with reference to the color of the violet, and compare l. 278, "dim darkness"). Here the word points the contrast between the limitless and radiant upper heaven and the narrow and dark earth.

6-8.—An elliptical construction. The words "in which" felt to be necessary after *and* in l. 6 are contained by implication in the *here* of l. 7: "Which men call Earth, and [in which] . . . [they] strive," etc. Ellipses of the relative of this character, impossible now, may be found occasionally in prose at this time and later.

7.—*pestered*. Restrained (as by a clog, load, etc.) from free movement. Milton's use of the word with *pinfold*, a pound for cattle, may indicate that he had the original meaning of *pester* in mind, to hobble an animal to graze.

9-14.—Specific Christian conceptions and Scriptural references are included in each of these six lines. The passage is an excellent example of Milton's unhesitating freedom in blending Hebrew and Christian with classic conceptions. Note especially that he describes the true servants wearing the crown of sainthood as sitting among the enthroned gods.

9.—*the crown that Virtue gives*. The heavenly crown given to those who achieve sainthood. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible" (1. Corinthians, ix, 25), "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation, ii, 10).

10.—*this mortal change*. Change of, or produced by, death. The use of the demonstrative is not idiomatic; it should be *the* or *that*. It has not hitherto been noted that Milton obviously has in mind the beautiful passage in Corinthians, xv, 51 ff., used in the Burial Service: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a mo-

ment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and *this mortal* must put on immortality."

11.—The student must guard against the easy and current error of supposing that the enthroned gods occupy the sainted seats—an error prevented, it is hoped, in this edition, by the use of commas before and after "amongst the enthroned gods." It has long been pointed out that Milton's reference is to the four and twenty seats of the elders in Revelation, v, 4 (which see), but it has not been noted that, as shown by Revelation, v, 8–10, the elders typify those who have won sainthood, *i. e.*, the "true servants."

12.—**be**. The old plural of the present indicative of the verb "to be," now supplanted in standard English by the Scandinavian "are," but retained in rustic and provincial use.—**by due steps**. By steps set in the path of duty, that is, by observance of their duty; compare *Il Penseroso*, 155.

13.—**just hands**. As being hands of "just" men, "justified" before God; the familiar Biblical use.—**golden key**. See the note on *Lycidas*, 110, 111.

16.—**ambrosial**. Not "of or pertaining to ambrosia, the food of the gods," but by figurative transfer of its etymological sense, "immortal, hence celestial, heavenly."

17.—**mould**. Bodily form; human shape, "sin-worn," as defaced by the curse of original sin.

18–23.—After the overthrow of Saturn, his sons divided his realm, Jupiter taking the upper world and the mainland, Pluto the underworld, Neptune the seas and streams and the islands of the sea. Neptune's portion accordingly lay between that of high Jove, Jupiter himself, and of Pluto, "nether Jove". The epithets "high" and "nether" (though not thus put in antithesis) go back to Homer (see Osgood).

23.—**unadornèd**. Otherwise not adorned, its surface being level and unvarying, unlike that of the earth.

24.—**tributary gods**. The lesser deities of the sea who owed him tribute and allegiance. *Cf.* ll. 870 ff.

25.—**by course**. In due or proper order.—**several government**. Separate government; that is, one to each.

26.—**sapphire**. Used as a gem of appropriate color.

27.—**But this Isle**. *Cf.* *Richard II*, II, i, 40 ff. Note carefully the significance of the *but*. The mistake has frequently

been made of supposing that it sets off the "blue-haired deities" of l. 29 against the "tributary gods" of l. 24. This is not the case. It sets off *quarters*, l. 29, against "commits to several government," l. 25. Other isles he commits to several government, but this he quarters.

29.—*quarters*. The verb *quarter* may mean "to divide into four parts," or, in a free use, to divide into less or more parts. The point is in a sense immaterial, except that if Milton meant literally a division into four, we may suppose he referred, as Keightley surmised, to four centres of government, namely, those in Edinburgh and London, together with the Presidencies of the North and of Wales.—**blue-haired**. There are frequent references in the masques and elsewhere (for example, Drayton, *Polyolbion*, II, 45) to the sea gods as blue or green, epithets which go back to the *cæruleus*, blue, and *glaucus*, bluish or greenish gray, of Latin authors. Milton's epithet, as Osgood notes, seems an adaptation of an epithet applied to Poseidon (Neptune) in the *Iliad* (XIII, 563, XIV, 390).

30-36.—One of several direct references of a complimentary character to persons connected with or concerned in the giving of the play and incidental to its occasional character. The peer is the Earl of Bridgewater, in whose honor it was given. See the prefatory note. "The sceptre was not newly entrusted," but the reference is quite justified by the fact that the play was in honor of his induction into office.

31.—**of mickle trust**. Of great trustworthiness.

32.—**has**. This form, originally Northern, is rare in Milton. He usually uses the Midland and Southern *hath*.—**with tempered awe**. With the reverential dread inspired by his office, tempered by his just and merciful discharge of its duties.

33.—**The Welsh**. Milton's tribute, as Trent notes, was not merely an empty compliment on his part, as the epic he planned on Arthur and his *History of Britain* show.

34.—**Where**. To which (the "tract" of l. 30), whither.

35.—**to attend their father's state**. To wait upon their father, in token of dutiful respect, on his assumption of his new dignities, and be present at the ceremonials signaling his installation. *Attend* still implied a service of duty in Milton's time.

37.—**pérplexed**. Interwoven, entangled; the original use.

40.—Note the reference to the children's age. See the prefatory note.

41.—**sovrán.** A shortened form of *soverain* (whence, by influence of *reign*, our spelling *sovereign*).

45.—**hall or bower.** A traditional phrase in poetic and other reference. The hall was the great living-room, and the bower the inner or private room of the lord or, perhaps, more specially the lady (as now in pseudo-archaic use), in a castle or manor. The bard or minstrel of early days might be called to sing in either, choosing appropriate songs or tales in each case.

46-49.—The sailors (pirates, in fact) on the ship on which Bacchus, god of wine, was proceeding to Naxos, plotted to sell him into slavery. As they were on the point of seizing him, he caused the ship to be wreathed with ivy, turned their oars to serpents, and changed them to dolphins.

47.—**sweet poison of misused wine.** Poison when misused.

48.—After the transformation of the Tuscan mariners; a Latin construction. Compare *post urbem conditam*, after the building of the city. Such a phrase in English as "after their changed condition" for "after the change in their condition" is somewhat similar. *Tuscan* and *Tyrrhene* (in the next line) are practically equivalent. The sailors in the legend were Tyrrhenians (see Osgood). The sea of that name lay between Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily, and, it will be remembered, modern Tuscany borders upon it.

50.—This part of the story is, apparently, Milton's invention, "never yet . . . heard in tale or song." The island of Circe, according to Vergil and others, was in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Milton evidently placed it at Circeii. For the story of Circe see the *Odyssey*, X.

55.—The ivy was sacred to Bacchus.

59.—Grown to full age, and exulting (compare our *frollicsome*) in the enjoyment of it. *Of* as connected with *ripe* means "as respects," as connected with *frollic* means "because of."

60, 61.—To give the illusion of reality to the story. As Bacchus his father roved westward, Comus ranges the Celtic (French) and Iberian (Spanish) fields, and so comes to England. The same instinct leads the poet in l. 61 to change from the past tense to the present, bringing the pagan deity, Comus, into proper relation with his purpose in point of time as in the previous line in point of place.

61.—**ominous.** Of evil omen, hence forbidding.

65.—**orient.** Lustrous like gems of the fine quality specially characteristic of those of the Orient; hence, brilliant.—**crystal glass.** Glass vessels were in use from the Anglo-Saxon period and earlier, but their use was not general for drinking purposes, as “a glass” might denote a vessel of any kind, bottle, chemical implement, reliquary, etc.

66.—**drouth of Phœbus** Thirst caused by the sun. Note the redundant syllable before the cæsura, a license Milton did not permit himself in his later poems, except when partial elision was possible.

67.—**fond.** Foolish; still in dialectal and literary use.

71.—**ounce.** A kind of lynx.

72.—An unpoetical line. It prepares, as editors note, for the appearance of the monsters in Comus's following, shortly to enter. The change wrought by Comus is less complete than that of Circe as respects bodily features, but more complete in its total transformation of the victim mentally and spiritually. In a dramatic production, bodily change in respect to countenance only was expedient because of convenience, and because here complete animal form would have involved grotesqueness and would have suggested purely comic anti-masques.

73.—**perfect.** Complete, utter.—**misery.** Pitiabie state; the use follows the Latin.

79.—**adventurous.** Full of risk; perilous.

80.—**glancing.** Moving in a slanting direction. The line suggests a falling star.

83.—**spun out of Iris' woof.** Iris was the goddess of the rainbow. Milton exercises the freedom of the true poet. To spin what is woven is, from the prosaic point of view, impossible. Two figures are here superimposed; the woof (note the suggestion of the bands of color) or fabric which Iris weaves, delicate and immaterial as it is, is such as can be spun to make the robes of spirits. But such complex images are beautiful in general suggestion (impressionistic, one might call them).

84.—Another personal compliment—here to Henry Lawes, to whom Milton attributes powers like those of Orpheus.

86.—**smooth-dittied.** Set to music “smoothly.” *Smooth* is often used in the seventeenth century in this connection; it means “composed with unvarying skill and charming effect.” The milkmaid sang the “smooth” song which Raleigh wrote to Izaak Walton.

88.—**nor of less faith.** Not less faithful than skilful.

89.—**mountain watch.** Over his sheep on the hills.

90.—Most likely to be here and the one nearest at hand to render aid.

92.—**Stage direction. charming-rod.** The customary wand of the enchanter.—**rout.** A disorderly company.—**glistering.** Glistering, shining, or sparkling. This portion of the masque constitutes an antimasque. See the prefatory note.

93.—**The star that bids the shepherd fold.** Hesperus, the evening star. L. 93 echoes Shakespeare's "the unfolding star calls up the shepherd," *Measure for Measure*, IV, ii, 218. It holds its place high in the heavens (by hyperbole, the "top of heaven") just after sunset.

95-97.—The gilded car of day is the chariot of the sun-god, Phœbus. Osgood (so Todd) notes that Milton may have derived his allusion to the cooling (*allay*, l. 96, which had this special meaning) of the sun's glowing axle in the Atlantic from the reference in Statius or in Juvenal to the hissing of the chariot of Hyperion as it plunged into the western ocean at sunset. The poet speaks of the Atlantic stream with reference to the mythological conception of the ocean as a great stream that girdled the earth. The epithet *steep* has met with varied explanations—"deep," "glittering," "falling abruptly" (as suggested by the sun's descent), may serve as examples. Two explanations are possible. One is that the poet refers to the appearance of the sea as sloping upward to the horizon. The other, and preferable, explanation is that while Milton refers to the chariot of the sun, his conception of the earth here involved is partly modern as well as classical, as shown by the succeeding lines; he therefore had in mind the downward slope of the ocean beyond the horizon, a steep corresponding to the "Indian steep" of l. 139 on the eastern side.

93-144.—The speech of Comus to his followers, in which he announces the coming of evening and summons them to join in their revels, leads up to and anticipates the spirit of the dance which follows. It is therefore in a lyric or songlike measure, not in the blank verse in which the direct action of the play, that which directly concerns the fortunes of the chief personages, is carried on. The difference is in the shorter line, varied movement, and use of rime.

98-101.—This passage, left without comment by many editors, is really one of great difficulty. One explanation, satis-

factory at first sight, is that the sun, "slope" as sunk on its sloping course below the horizon, still shoots an upward beam toward the zenith, here called the pole, which is growing dusk as the sun disappears. But *pole* is not used for the zenith; the nearest use of it to this sense is for the sky or heavens. That Milton did not have in mind the last beams of the sun lingering in a sky growing dusky is apparent from the original reading in the MS., which was "northern pole." Dr. H. B. Evans informs me that no accurate astronomical explanation can be offered for the passage but that Milton may here refer to the Aurora Borealis, having heard of certain theories regarding it not printed till later in the century.

101.—The usual reference here to Psalms, xix, 4, 5, is not in point. Nothing is said there of the east, merely that the sun comes forth as a bridegroom. Milton has in mind the familiar classical conception. So also the "other goal" was possibly suggested by Homer (see Osgood, s. v. *Apollon*).

105.—**rosy twine.** A twine or garland of roses.

110.—**grave saws.** Maxims or moral sayings of serious nature uttered gravely in exhortation or rebuke.

111.—**of purer fire.** With less of the earthly than mortals; the fire being taken, according to the classic conception, as the principle of life or more nearly resembling it.

112.—**starry choir.** The reference is to the music of the spheres. See *Nativity Ode*, l. 125, *n*. The spheres are "watchful," as being observant of their proper times and motions.

115.—**sounds and seas.** The narrower and wider parts of the ocean.—**finny drove.** Compare Horace, *Odes*, I, ii, 7-9.

116.—The tidal motion of the sounds and seas responsive to the moon's attraction is likened to the morris dance (by derivation a Moorish dance), popular in mediæval times and still traditional in parts of England, in which various figures are danced by a number of characters, the Hobby-horse, Queen of the May, Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and others.

117.—**tawny sands.** Verity notes that Milton first used "yellow" and changed it because it would suggest a copying of Ariel's song in *The Tempest*.—**shelves.** That is, of rock.

118.—**pert.** Trim, neat, trig (with suggestion of pettiness of size); an obsolete sense in a different line of development from its present use.—**dapper.** Trim, neat in appearance (retained in latter sense).

119.—**brim**. Its original sense, the shore of the sea or other body of water.

121.—**wakes**. A *wake* is a night-watch or vigil. Milton's use includes the associations the word has with vigils held before church festivals, which, like the watches beside dead persons before burial, served as an occasion for festivity and merrymaking.

125.—**rites**. Milton's spelling *rights* has suggested the query whether the meaning is not "our rightful festivities." The word intended, however, is rites.

127.—**dun**. Properly dark brown; in extended (poetic) use, dark, dusky.

129.—**Cotytto** (ko-tit'-to). A goddess, originally Thracian, whose worship was conducted in secret and by night. Milton may have drawn here, as Osgood points out, from a reference to Cotytto in Juvenal (*Satiræ*, II, 91 f.).

131.—The Stygian darkness is like a dragon's womb or belly that spits up the thick smoke and reek characteristic of the dragons of our Northern mythology. Milton may well have had the idea of dragons suggested to him in this connection by descriptions of the chariot of Night, or that which bore Medea, as drawn by dragons. 133.—**one blot**. An emphatic use of *one* in the sense "of one kind" (compare *all one, one whole*). Trent aptly cites "he is one mass of conceit." Note the idea of obliteration in *blot*.

134.—**chair**. Chariot.

135.—**Hecate**. Hecatë was originally a moon-goddess, as Osgood notes, but in a later conception goddess of witchcraft and sorcery, and, in general, of horrors suggested by darkness. She is associated with Cotytto, because of her frequent association with other deities of darkness in classical reference. The last vowel of *Hecate* is here elided—the usual pronunciation among the Elizabethans.

139.—**nice**. Modest or shy, or affectedly so; not over-particular or precise, as usually explained in accordance with the modern sense.—**the Indian steep**. The slope in the far east corresponding in Milton's poetic conception of the sun's course to the steep of the Atlantic stream implied in l. 97. Compare Spenser's phrase "eastern hill," similar in idea, but less imaginative in expression.

147.—**shrouds**. This use is derived from the verb in its sense of "to cover, conceal."—**brakes**. Tangles of brushwood or briars; thickets.

151.—**trains. Lures.** So used by Spenser and Shakespeare.

154.—**dazzling spells.** The MS. reads, "powder'd spells," the use of a powder hurled into the air being also indicated by the "magic dust" of l. 165. Masson suggested that the change to *dazzling* may imply use of a combustible powder; this is possible, or perhaps the use of powdered tinsel or the like is indicated.—**spongy air.** So called as taking up and holding the wizard's spells in suspension.

155.—**blear illusion.** Illusion that blears or dims the eyes to what is real, rendering "false presentments" possible.

157.—**quaint habits.** Strange or unusual garments.

158.—**suspicious flight.** Flight caused by suspicion.

161.—**glozing courtesy.** To *gloze* is to cause something wrong to appear as if right; also, an obsolete sense, to flatter. The former sense is intended, as the parallel word *unplausible*, l. 162, shows.

163.—**wind me.** Compare the metaphor involved in this use with that in *insinuate*.

164.—**hug.** A use now obsolete: to caress (a person) to gain his good-will or trust. *Cf. Julius Caesar*, I, ii, 74.

167.—**about his country gear.** In seeing to the affairs or duties with which a countryman is occupied. *Gear*, now archaic, in its original and chief senses means clothes, arms, or equipment of any kind.

168.—**fairly.** Quietly; an obsolete sense, in origin a development from use of the word in such phrases as "to part fairly," "to leave fairly," that is, to part or go away from a person on pleasant terms, hence peaceably, and hence gently or quietly.

172.—**ill-managed.** An unfamiliar use to us in its suggestion. Milton used it as we would use "ill-regulated," in the sense of "not under proper control."

173.—The flute or pipe when playing "gamesome" or "jocund" music.

174.—**loose unlettered hinds.** Hinds or rustics untaught and therefore ignorant or heedless of proper behavior—here in the stronger sense, loose in morals, lax and vicious.

175.—**teeming.** Bearing young abundantly.—**granges.** Granaries, barns.

176.—**Pan.** See *Nativity Ode*, l. 89, n.

177.—**thank the gods amiss.** In a way not proper and truly acceptable.

178.—**swilled.** To "swill" is to drink greedily and intemperately. Our phrase would be "drunken insolence."

179.—**wassailers.** Drinkers, carousers. A wassail is a drinking-bout from the old pledge “wæs hæl,” “may it be to your health or welfare,” “here’s to your health.”

180.—**inform.** Direct, guide.

181.—**mazes.** Compare the similar use of *labyrinth*, l. 278. *Maze* is used in the plural to denote the many windings of a maze, as if one were involved in a succession of different mazes.

188–190.—**sad.** Intent, serious, but with some coloring of the usual modern sense.—**votarist.** One bound by a vow, as to make a pilgrimage or perform a penance.—**palmer.** A pilgrim entitled to wear the palm as having made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The characteristic gray, hooded cloak of palmers is referred to in the previous line.

The figure combines images somewhat incongruous to our modern habit of thought, but not to that of Milton’s age. Moreover, indeed, in Milton’s time the chariot of Phœbus was not definitely “classical” in association as it is to us, so wholly naturalized had it become in poetic reference. Evening like a gray-hooded palmer rises (*rose* is literal, not figurative), following upon the flaming chariot of day as it departs. The figure is not one consistent figure, but two figurative images balanced in antithesis on the literal word *rose*. To which it may be added that “the hindmost wheels of Phœbus’ wain” do not imply, as some editors have noted, that Milton supposed Phœbus’s chariot to have two pairs of wheels. The phrase is a Latinism for “immediately at the back of Phœbus’ wain,” that is, evening closely followed the departure of day.

193.—**engaged.** Put to use or service (now only in the broader sense, “provide occupation for,” and chiefly passive, “to be engaged on”), but with coloring of the obsolete sense, “to advance (an army, etc.) so far as to render withdrawal difficult.

195–225.—This passage is omitted in the Bridgewater MS., which probably represents the acting version of the play. The portion omitted was inappropriate to a child playing the part.

195.—**stole.** An obsolete variant of the past participle *stolen*. Compare the similar forms *wove*, *prove*, *clove*, *spoke*, etc., for *woven*, *proven*, etc.—**thievish Night.** Osgood notes that this is suggested by Ovid’s *furtivæ noctes* (*Eleg.*, I, xl, 3).

197.—The metaphor in this passage is of the elaborate or over-fanciful kind (often beautiful, but transcending good taste through extravagance or over-ingenuity) called a “conceit.”

203.—**rife**. Continuous and persistent.—**perfect**. Perfectly heard, unmistakable.

204.—**single darkness**. Darkness alone, unmingled with any light; so used by poets before Milton, usually (as not here) of freedom from commixture with a baser element. This passage contains the earliest reference to a "dark lantern" (note the connection with "thievish Night").

205.—Editors follow each other in citing *The Tempest*, Purchas's abstract of Marco Polo, Heywood's *Hierarchy of Angels*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (to which Milton was elsewhere indebted), and other works, as possible sources for this passage (especially ll. 207-209).

210.—**well**. By poetic license, for the sake of the metre, *well* follows instead of preceding the verb as it usually would.

212.—**siding**. That sides with, or takes the part of, one. It is perhaps worth mention that Milton in his *Commonplace Book* (Camden Society, 1878) has the following note: "The cause of valour a good conscience, for an evil conscience, as an English author noteth well, will otherwise knaw at the roots of valour like a worm and undermine all resolutions. *Ward. Militar. Sect. 7.*"—**Conscience**. Pronounce as three syllables.

213-215.—The Lady is not apostrophizing the Christian virtues as guiding principles of life; she addresses the three that appear to her spiritual vision as those which will aid her in her peril—Faith upholding her, Hope to lead her on, Chastity as her guard from every harm.

216.—**ye**. The nominative used as accusative: common in Elizabethan use, and at present in provincial use. Compare the oblique case *thee* for nominative *thou* in Quaker speech.

217.—**to whom**. Pronounced *to'oom*, one of the elisions regularly admitted by Milton.

219-220.—The theme of the play that no ill can come to true chastity here first receives direct expression. Note the belief expressed in ll. 217 *f.*, which is a corollary of it, that all things ill are in "slavish" subjection to the Supreme Good and used only as officers of vengeance on things and beings that are evil—that evil can prey only upon evil. Milton drew his conception of his theme from Christian, not from classical poets and philosophers, where it also may be found, but in a different form. In the present passage, while embodying the Christian conception, he has to avoid any direct reference at odds with his mythological setting. Hence God is referred to as the "Supreme

Good," a term which may permissibly refer also to Jove, and the phrase "glistening guardian" is used which, while it directly suggests the guardian angels, and the glistening garments of the angels, in the Scriptures, also may refer, without a suggestion of incongruity, to the Attendant Spirit sent by Jove.

221.—The question uttered half in hope, half in fear, with which the Lady interrupts herself, is repeated, when assurance comes, in the form of an affirmation. —**sable**. Deep black; this use is derived from the "tincture" in heraldry, originally named from the Russian fur, the best of which is black.

225.—**casts**. This is not the anacoluthon or change of construction it first seems. Taking the sentence by itself one would expect an infinitive corresponding to *turn*. But it is only the first clause that is inverted for emphasis in response to the previous question. This clause is additional and is in the direct form, with the verb therefore in the indicative.—**tufted**. A more or less frequent poetic epithet in Milton's predecessors, as noted under *L'Allegro*, l. 78.

226.—The Lady was not able to shout the halloo, as customarily used, for example, in calling to dogs in hunting; knowing her inability to make her voice carry in that way, she therefore uses the best way she knows to make "such noise as can be heard farthest."

It should be noted that this line is a "run-on line," that is, it ends with a word expressing relation only, namely *but*, which must necessarily be read in close connection with the clause it introduces. To make up for this the pause at the last logical break, just before *but*, is lengthened. The metrical unity of the lines is not really broken by this license; the ear detects it and in fact enjoys the variation from the usual "end-stopped" line.

230-243.—Songs addressed to Echo are frequent in the masques. Scenes in which Echo is addressed appear also in a number of plays other than masques (for a famous example, see Webster's *Vittoria Corrombona*). In these, and often in the masques, Echo answers, the question being so contrived that the repetition of the last few words by Echo provides a suitable reply, frequently with a new and divertingly unexpected change of meaning. Milton does not use this device here apparently, as there is no stage direction to that effect and the words of the song would not provide answers. It is possible, however, that they may have been apparently echoed, for the Lady says in

ll. 275 *f.*, that she was compelled to awake the "courteous Echo" to give her answer.

Milton wrote few songs, but his great skill as a metrist insured him such success in this mode, despite its special difficulties, as to justify a comparison on equal terms with even the greatest Elizabethans. The differences are those that might be anticipated. Exquisite as is the imaginative conception of this song and beautiful as are its images and diction, it suggests studied art, as Shakespeare's and Ben Jonson's, for example, do not. Exquisite also, judged as a poem, as a song it has not the unity and directness of movement, the lightness of accent, the accurate regulation of balance of accents and quantities in the lyric pattern which characterize those masters of song-writing at their best. See, in regard to the song, the *Introduction to Schelling's Elizabethan Lyrics* and read in comparison with this song "Hark, hark, the lark."

In reading songs it is particularly necessary to use the sustained voice, to read slowly at first until the relation of the shorter lines to the longer is clearly perceived (one is apt to hurry these unduly), and to make sure that one observes the actual stresses of human speech. Line 233 is an example of this last point. It should not be read:

And in the violét embroïdered vále,

but with an anapest in the second foot—

Ànd in the violét embroïdered vále.

The same pattern is used in ll. 235, 236. Line 241 is a notable variation on the simple two-syllable movement.

Sweét Queen of Párley, daúghter of the sphére.

The following line, apparently a pentameter, has really four stresses in reading

Só may'st thou bé transláted to the skiés

Note the regular rhythm of the Alexandrine at the close (as of the opening pentameter), and how all its stresses but the first fall on syllables of marked length and openness.

A word of comment is necessary in regard to the rimes of the song. The pronunciation of practically all words in Milton's

time was sensibly different from that of to-day. *Are*, l. 237, was pronounced, as now in rustic use, *air*, and made a true rime with *pair*, as also with *where* and *sphere*, ll. 240, 241. *Have* (in one standard pronunciation) and *cave*, ll. 238, 239, both had an *a* like that in *part*. This *a* was short in *have* and long in *cave*, but this difference would disappear with *have* under metrical and logical stress.

230.—**Echo** was a nymph, daughter of the Earth and Air, whom Juno punished for betraying Jove's secrets, condemning her never to speak except in answer to questions. She fell in love with Narcissus (l. 237) and pined away till only her voice was left. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 351 ff.

231.—**airy shell**. Editors have suggested that Milton meant the immaterial body of Echo, as reduced merely to a voice; or the musical shell, the conch, used as a trumpet; or a sea-shell with its murmuring. A variant *cell*, noted by the poet for consideration on the edge of the MS., shows that the true meaning is the shell or concave of the air, the "sphere" of l. 241. But there can be little doubt that Milton used the word to suggest also the sea-shell with its echo of the sea.

232.—**Meander**. Our word "to meander" is derived from the name of this river of Phrygia, famed for its many windings. The airy habitation of Echo may be anywhere.—**margent**. Margin.

233.—Probably, as Hales suggests, Milton drew here from a reference in Sophocles to the nightingales of Colonus, near Athens, still famous, as Hales shows, for its violets and nightingales. Milton here mentions the violet, the flower of Athens, the "violet-crowned" city, and in *Paradise Regained*, IV, 425, he definitely associates the nightingale with Athens.

234.—**lovelorn**. Bereft of one loved, or pining because of love. Bell explained this as a reference to Aëdon who, changed to a nightingale, lamented her son whom she had killed by mistake. The allusion usually accepted is that the nightingale is pining because of love, which is not in accordance with the actual story of Philomel. See note to *Il Penseroso*, l. 56.

237.—**Narcissus**. The beautiful youth for love of whom Echo pined away, as he himself did later—becoming the flower that bears his name—out of love of his own image reflected in a stream.

239.—**flowery cave**. Compare also the *mossy couch* of l. 276. Classical references represent Echo as dwelling in woods and caves. See Osgood and compare Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 393.

241.—**Parley.** Interchange of speech, perhaps with partial implication of its formal use of a debate to which one is summoned, in allusion to Echo's being permitted to speak only when addressed.—**sphere.** Of the air, but also anticipatory of the graceful fancy following that, if she will but tell, it may be given her to add grace to the music of the spheres.

243.—**Comus** comes from his hiding-place into the view of the audience, having disguised himself as a "harmless villager" or shepherd. His speech is an "aside" until he advances and addresses the Lady in l. 265.

247.—**the vocal air.** The air as giving voice to the song. This is the usual and to us the natural sense owing to our familiarity with such phrases as "the air was vocal with melody," "birds rendered the air vocal." It is possible, however, that Milton uses *air* in its obsolete sense of "breath," and that "vocal air" means literally the breath giving voice to the song. The something holy lodges in that breast and there moves the vocal air to testify his hidden residence.

249.—It is interesting to note how the figure of the "wings of silence" is echoed by the beautiful figure in l. 251 of the "raven down of darkness." The down is smoothed till it shines with smoothness—hence, in vivid metaphor, smiles.

251.—**fall.** A falling sequence of notes in music, a cadence.

253.—**the Sirens three.** The Sirens (see the *Odyssey*, XII, 39 ff., 166 ff.) were beings in the form of women who, seated near the edge of the sea (in a meadow, in the *Odyssey*; on rocks by the water's edge, in Vergil and elsewhere), beguiled seafarers to their destruction by their beauty and the sweetness of their singing. In the classics they are in no way associated, as here, with Circe. It is clear (see note on ll. 257 ff.) that the island of Circe was for Milton at Circeii in geographical proximity to the Sirens, whose abiding-place lay between it and Scylla and Charybdis.

Two of the Sirens are mentioned in ll. 879, 880: Parthenope, said to have been buried in Naples, the "dear tomb," of l. 879, and Ligea, to whom Milton ascribes "soft alluring locks" on the authority probably of Vergil, *Georgics*, IV, 337. Milton also pictures her as combing her locks, like, as Masson pointed out, a Teutonic mermaid (Lorelei) rather than a classic Siren.

254.—**Naiades.** Nymphs of springs and streams. The *Odyssey* (X, 350), as Osgood points out, speaks of Circe's hand-

maids as "born of the wells, and of the woods, and of the holy rivers." The phrase "flowery-kirtled" is probably a borrowing of Ovid's *pictis incinctæ vestibus*, *Fasti*, V, 217, used of the Hours. Various commentators upon Ovid (Osgood) speak of the Hours as wearing garments made of flowers.

255.—This line, as Osgood notes, was probably suggested by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, XIV, 267 *f.*) in his account of Circe.

257.—**elysium**. Elysium, in classical mythology, was a place where good men dwell eternally, by special election of the gods, without tasting death. From classic references to the fields of asphodel, "the idea of Elysium is closely associated in the mind of Milton with that of flowers," *cf. L'Allegro*, 145-147, *Paradise Lost*, III, 358 *f.*, *Comus*, 992-998, and the present passage (Osgood). The poet does not use the word figuratively, as the phrase "lap it in elysium" proves, and it should not here be printed, as it is in modernized editions, with a capital. It had already, long before Milton's time, lost its specific sense, and come to be used to mean a state of blissful happiness.

—**Scylla**. Scylla was a rock in the Straits of Messina, and Charybdis (l. 259) the whirlpool opposite. These have given rise to various stories. Circe, jealous because of the love the sea-god Glaucus bore for the nymph Scylla, poisoned the spring where she bathed, which caused her to change into a succession of monstrous forms. She threw herself into the sea and became (*Æneid*, III, 551-560) a monster in a cave surrounded by "barking waves" (*latrantibus undis*). Milton's version (see Osgood) is from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, 40-74, as proved by *Paradise Lost*; II, 660), namely, that Scylla was transformed by Circe while bathing in the Sicilian Straits, in such wise that she was surrounded by barking dogs which she could not flee from, as they were a part of her, and so in the extremity of her grief was changed to a rock.

263.—**waking bliss**. Bliss actually known in "sober certainty" while awake, though such as one would think would come only in the unreality of dreams.

265.—**foreign**. From without this country-side.

267.—**unless**. Unless (thou art).—**rural shrine**. Every country-side among the ancients might have its special tutelary deity worshipped by the country folk together with the greater gods and invoked with them for aid and protection. *Comus* pretends to see such a goddess in the Lady, who by the blest influence of her song is charming away evil influences. The

indirect personal compliment to Lady Alice and her parents implied in the whole speech of Comus (remembering that the Lady is acting half in her own character) is apparent.

268.—**Sylvan.** Sylvanus was properly a god of the woods, but, according to Vergil (see Osgood), of the fields also. Compare *Il Penseroso*, 134; *Paradise Lost*, IV, 707.

269.—**fog.** The dampness and cold of fog are "unkindly," as thought to produce mildew and blight. Compare l. 433.

271.—**gentle shepherd.** This use of *gentle* as a complimentary term of address (compare "gentle sir, gentle lady," etc., and the "gentle taper" of l. 337), if not archaic and poetic only in Milton's time, became so shortly afterward. It survives only in "gentle reader" in other than archaic use. Its use with *shepherd*, owing to Milton chiefly, became a poetic idiom.—**ill is lost.** In ill wise is lost or wasted; a Latinism, *male perditur*.

273.—**boast of skill.** Desire to show off my skill in singing.—**éxtreme shift.** For the accentuation, see the note on l. 4. The use of *shift* is a pregnant poetic use, "difficulty and danger leading to the use of any shift or resource that may bring help."

278-290.—A notable example of stichomythia, or dialogue in alternate lines, as used in Greek tragedy, in Seneca, and in English tragedies under classic influence.

278.—**dim darkness.** Dusky or shadowy darkness; see the note on l. 5.—**leavy.** This is the form the word would naturally assume, but the influence of the primitive *leaf* is constantly felt, rendering *leafy* the more common form. Tennyson seemed to prefer *leavy*.—**labyrinth.** The same figure is used in l. 181.

279.—**near-ushering.** The guides went before (implied in *ushering*), but near at hand. The word may be used also with implication of ceremonious or deferential guidance (its usual sense), in compliment to the Lady.

282.—As Verity notes, a somewhat different reason is given in ll. 185 *f*.

283.—The construction is elliptic on a Latin model, "and left your side (and you so fair) unguarded." The body of the phrase perhaps follows the Latin *tegere latus alicui*, to walk close by the side of, as Verity suggests.

285.—**prevented.** Perhaps in the obsolete sense "anticipate," but quite as probably in its present familiar sense.

286.—**hit.** This use of *hit*, “to reach or strike something aimed at,” is confined practically to physical relations to-day, except in such phrases as “to hit the point,” “he hit it exactly.” The meaning is not to “hit upon,” or guess.

287.—“Is their loss a matter of concern or importance aside from the present need?” The real purpose of Comus, to ascertain the character of the Lady’s companions, is satisfied by her answer.

291.—**what time.** At such time as; at the time when.—**labored.** That has been worked hard, hence, wearied with labor; compare *swinked*, l. 293.

292.—The idea of an ox in traces, loosed from the plough, is unfamiliar to Americans.

293.—**swinked.** The obsolete verb *swink*, from A. S. *swincan*, implies hard toil. It was obsolete in Milton’s time, except perhaps dialectally. It survives only in a variant form and in the phrase “a swingeing blow,” one of great force.

294.—**mantling.** Forming a mantle or covering; hence, of a vine, spreading over and covering what it hangs or rests on.

295.—**yon small hill.** Comus points, as Verity suggests, to some part of the scenery in the background. Or possibly, as we would say, “off the wings.”

297.—**port.** The way a person carries himself, bearing, hence his aspect as due to this; frequent in Elizabethan use.

298.—**faëry.** A variant of *fairy* and used in the same general range of senses, namely, the realm of the fairies, fairies collectively, a single fairy. —**vision.** The ending *-ion*, more rarely *-ean*, may form two syllables—its earlier pronunciation—and, by virtue of the secondary accent on *-on* when so pronounced, serve as a full foot (so, at the end of the line, in ll. 365, 377, 413, 457, 467, 641, 685, 749, *cf.* also *Consciënce*, l. 212—and within the line in l. 603).

299.—**creatures of the element.** The spirits of the air (see the note on *Il Penseroso*, 93), the context indicating that air is the element meant. Water and fire are also thus alluded to, less often earth; water even to-day, and both water and air in the trite phrase “the war of the elements.”

301.—**plighted.** Plaited or folded, disposed in folds.

308.—**starlight.** Normally this word is stressed on the first syllable. The word really, however, here receives two stresses, and the line is an example of Milton’s occasional use of two stresses in conjunction following upon two normally unaccented

syllables. In reading a light stress should be put upon *of* and two nearly equal stresses upon the syllables of *starlight*.

309.—**land-pilot's art.** This phrase is suggested to the Lady by the form of the direction Comus gives in l. 306.

311.—**alley.** A walk or path in a garden or wood; the earliest recorded sense in English and the current sense in German.

312.—**dingle.** In dialectal use, a deep valley between hills; in literary use, perhaps owing to Milton (see N. E. D.), a deep dell (valley or hollow), wooded or overshadowed by trees.

313.—**bosky bourne.** "Bushy" or wooded brook. *Bourne* is more familiar in its Northern (Scottish) form *burn*.

314.—**ancient.** Known of old.

315.—**attendance.** Those who afford attendance, attendants; an obsolete use.

316.—**shroud.** Find cover, hide or shelter; compare the use of the noun in l. 147, and note.

317.—**low-roosted lark.** The lark does not roost, but makes her nest on the ground. This nest, of dry grasses, forming her pallet or bed (l. 318) is spoken of as "thatch'd" because it is like thatch and suggests that it was made as one makes thatch for a roof. The reader will not need to be reminded of the part which the skylark with her thrilling flight and song has played in English poetry from Chaucer to Shelley, and in familiar reference ("to be up with the lark," "to sing like a lark").

319, 320.—**to a low, But loyal cottage.** To a cottage lowly and humble (as cottages are), but (with inmates) loyal to what is right and worthy of trust.

323-326.—Comparisons of this character are frequent in lyric and other verse throughout the seventeenth century and earlier. So common are they that we need not suppose a special personal animus in the passage presaging the republican Milton of a later day, as the editors suggest.

325.—**where it first was named.** *Courtesy* meant originally the manners and address appropriate to a court, and is derived from *court*. Milton here runs counter to Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, VI, i, 1.

327.—**Less warranted than this.** Offering less warrant of safety.

329.—**Eye me.** Keep watch over me, regard me.—**square.** Shape, adjust.

330.—**To my proportioned strength.** To my strength as it is proportioned; so as to be proportionate to my strength.

331-489.—This scene of 159 lines, more than a tenth of the whole, is of undue length when considered in relation to the service it renders in advancing the action of the play. Editors comment upon this fact and the lack of characterization in the two brothers as exemplifying Milton's lack of dramatic ability. He was probably deficient in this respect. However, Milton here gives formal and elaborate expression to the theme of the play already enunciated in brief by the Lady. Such an expression of it was needed in the play at this point. The minds of the audience are prepared for it and the repetition enforces it, especially in view of the fact that the Lady has just put herself in the power of Comus. Moreover, the play is a masque and an elaborate statement of its theme is justified; to its explicit presentation, action in the ordinary sense is subordinate. A similar criticism might just as well apply to many of Jonson's masques. In respect to the characterization of the brothers, it need only be added that they are playing in their own characters. The appeal to the spectators and especially to their parents resides in the fact that they become the mouthpieces of such lofty morality and beautiful poetry, as if these were, as might justly be conceived to be, natural to them.

331.—**Unmuffle.** *Muffle* meant originally "to wrap warmly" (it is connected with *muff*), hence, "to wrap closely for concealment." Milton's use of it in reference to stars and the moon has been imitated by several poets.

332.—**wontest.** Art wont or accustomed.

333.—**amber cloud.** Of the color of amber, yellowish-brown; referring to the color often seen when the moon shines through a cloud.

334.—**disinherit Chaos.** *Inherit* in a secondary use, now obsolete, came to mean "to take possession, or to hold, as one's right." It appears in early Biblical use, in Shakespeare, and in Milton (see *Samson Agonistes*, 1012, and N. E. D.). Verity's gloss "dispossess" is an apt equivalent. *Chaos* in the classical conception, like the formless void of Hebrew belief, was the original abyss of warring elements before the ordered universe came into being, or, further, the region of this character remaining above hell. This conception is sometimes personified.

336.—**influence.** Milton uses this word in its ordinary sense, but it was suggested to him (as it would not be to us) by its special astrological use with reference to the supposed power of

the heavenly bodies upon the earth and the fortunes of men. Note how its etymological meaning suggested to Milton the phrase "dammed up."

337.—**some gentle taper.** A direct address, as shown by "thy" and "thou" below. For *gentle*, see l. 271, *n.*

338.—**Though.** Though but (a rush-candle). The Elder Brother calls up a picture of the rudest and simplest conditions of life—a cotter's hut of clay, the window unglazed and filled with a grating of woven boughs (the door might possibly be a bundle of thorn or other brush), and the candle one made by dipping a rush for wick.

340.—**rule.** Referring to the sharpness and straightness of a beam of light through a window, as if ruled. Verity notes that the alliteration suggests the line of light; *cf.* Matthew Arnold's *The Scholar-Gipsy*, "The line of festal light in Christ-Church Hall."

341, 342.—The "star of Arcady" is an example of the somewhat recondite form in which Milton sometimes delights to couch his mythical allusions. Calisto, daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia (whence "Arcady"), having taken refuge among the nymphs of Diana, was loved by Jupiter and therefore changed, by Diana, Juno, or Jupiter himself, according to various versions of the story, into a bear and placed with her son Arcas among the stars, where they form the constellations of the Great and the Lesser Bear. The "star of Arcady," therefore stands for the constellation of the Great Bear. The "Cynosure (Gr. for "dog's tail") of the next line was another name for the Lesser Bear, because of its fancied resemblance to a dog's tail, and hence for the Pole Star at the tip of the tail (for a further development see the note on *L'Allegro*, 77). The Great Bear, according to the ancients, was used by Greek sailors in their navigation, the Cynosure by the Phœnicians (whence Milton's "Tyrian"). The sense of the passage is, therefore, "Thou shalt be our guiding-star in the darkness, as the Great Bear was to the Greeks, the Cynosure to the Tyrians."

344.—**wattled cotes.** Sheds or shelters made of hurdles.,

345.—**pastoral reed with oaten stops.** The shepherd's pipe, familiar in classic and later reference, properly made then and now of a reed or other woody hollow stem with the mouth end stopped as in our whistles, and with holes (stops) for the fingers. Jerram, in commenting upon *Lycidas*, 33, notes that there is no authority for the oaten pipe frequently referred to in English

verse. This is probably due to Vergil's *tenui avena* (*Eclogue*, I, 2), though *avena* may mean any straw or stalk. Milton uses *reed*, it will be noticed, simply as meaning *pipe*, not a reed pipe. The stops or openings are cut in an "oaten" straw.

346.—**lodge**. The hunting lodge, or keeper's house, which might be expected in the forest.

349.—**innumerable**. Innumerable.

355.—**Leans**. Not necessarily intransitive, with *head* as its subject, as some editors note. The *she* of l. 351 is felt as a subject all the way through, despite l. 353, as shown by its omission in l. 356.

356.—**What if**. What if [she should be], etc.—**amazement**. Overpowering terror, panic; one of several obsolete senses (stupefaction, frenzy, distraction, or bewilderment).

358.—**heat**. Desire or passion. Newton paraphrased the line aptly, "the hunger of savage beasts or the lust of men as savage as they."

359.—**over-exquisite**. Overanxiously careful in searching out; a special use of the obsolete sense "scrupulous in detail, accurate, precise."

360.—**cast**. Forecast, conjecture; a sense now obsolete. Milton's use is a little unusual. The usual phrases are "to cast peril, danger, peril, the worst." Milton uses the word of "evils," but interpolates "fashion."

361-364.—**grant they be so**. That they are evils (*be* is indicative; cf. l. 12, *n.*). A correlative phrase follows in l. 364, "Or if they be but false alarms of fear" (here *be* is subjunctive and equivalent to "should prove to be").

Warburton, in the eighteenth century, commented, "This line obscures the thought, and loads the expression; it had been better out." The criticism is not just, for the line contains an idea essential to the sense, "while they rest unknown." But Warburton probably felt what is true of this line in particular, as in some measure of the whole passage it introduces (ll. 361-365), namely, that the level of the poetry here sinks sensibly nearer to that of prose; cf. ll. 407-413. Perhaps it was Milton's design to make clear beyond question by set argument, the Elder Brother's studious and very proper care in the performance of his duty as guide and counsellor of his younger brother, and his poise and balance of mind under the responsibility involved in the loss of his sister. That he speaks with authority as the Elder Brother is unmistakable; note that

while the Second Brother speaks of "our" sister (ll. 350, 407) in talking with his brother (using "my" only once in a prayer to Heaven for her), his brother speaks of "my" sister (ll. 366, 415). But throughout the Elder Brother's speeches (as definitely in the passage 375-380, which is unquestionably autobiographical, as Pattison suggested) there is much that speaks directly from the least lovely side of Milton's character, noble as it was, namely, the tone of arrogance and conscious superiority he betrays when assuming the office of moralist.

The idea in the passage that it is foolish to anticipate "uncertain evils" is one familiar in proverbial warnings against "running to meet trouble half-way" (referred to in l. 363), "crossing a bridge before one comes to it," and the like.

362.—**What need a man.** 'Why does a man need to . . .' etc.—**date of grief.** Appointed time of unhappiness; probably rather in the sense of period or season (frequent in poetry of the period and earlier) than appointed time of beginning.

366.—**so to seek.** So wanting in what is sought or desired.

367.—**unprincipled.** Unschooled in the teachings of virtue and the ensuing peace of soul, preventing fear, which should form basic principles of character.

368.—**bosoms.** Holds cherished in the bosom.

369.—**single want.** Want alone, mere want.—**noise.** See *Nativity Ode*, 97, n.

370.—The absolute participial clause needs no subject, for the subject of the sentence *sister* is clearly held in mind throughout it.

371.—**constant.** Standing firm, steadfast, unchanging; the primitive etymological meaning.

372.—**plight.** State or condition; here, as often, implying an unfortunate or evil state through mischance.

373-375.—Milton here echoes the *Faerie Queene*, I, i, 12, "Virtue gives herself light through darkness far to wade."

375.—**flat sea.** The editors note *Lycidas*, 98, "the level sea," as a close parallel. A variation of the same idea appears in l. 23 above, "The unadornèd bosom of the deep." Milton's use of *flat* here perhaps expresses the emphasis of the speaker, picturing sun and moon sunk and the sea level over them.

375-380.—This passage is very probably autobiographical, as Pattison suggested, referring to the years Milton spent at Horton.

376.—**seeks to.** Resorts to; *cf.* in the 1611 *Bible*, Deuteronomy, xii, 5, and elsewhere.

377–380.—This would seem mixed metaphor, but, as elsewhere, Milton includes a figure within a figure. Having realized Wisdom in her retirement with Contemplation, he starts a new figure within the figurative world he has created as if it were itself a physical world.

378.—**plumes.** Preens; dresses, arranges. Warton urged the emendation *prunes* (equivalent to *preens*) as a specific term used in hawking and of birds generally, but Milton unquestionably wrote *plumes*.

379.—**various bustle of resort.** The press of varied activities in places where many resort.

380.—**all to-ruffled.** The editions which Milton supervised print *all to ruffled*. Early editors, unfamiliar with the prefix involved, emended *to* to *too*. The *to* is A. S. *to-*, M. E. *to-*, an intensive with the meaning *asunder*, cognate with German *zer-* and similar in meaning and use. *All* was often prefixed, as here, as an additional intensive, just as in our phrase “all to pieces.”

381–385.—Milton used this theme again, in a more elaborate and dramatic form, in *Samson Agonistes*, 151–163, with reference to Samson blinded and in bondage. The greater effectiveness of its use there is worth noting.

386.—**affects.** To show a preference for by habitual use.

387.—**pensive.** Permitting or conducive to thought.—**desert cell.** The thoughts of the Second Brother are led at once to the hermits of the earlier period of the Church who, enlarging upon Biblical example, betook themselves, to secure a life of uninterrupted meditation and devotion, to the “desert”—the desert actually where it was possible in the Orient (as in Egypt), or in such wild and solitary places, forests, or mountains, as offered themselves. The hermit is a familiar figure in mediæval romances and the literature which draws from it. The Greek original means “one who dwells in the desert.”

388.—Gray perhaps patterns on Milton here, as Verity suggests, though with a different intention in meaning, in the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, 73, “Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife.”

389.—Editors note that Milton has in mind the sanctity which invested the Roman senate. Verity adds a reference to Cromwell’s disregard of the privilege of Parliament, April 20, 1653.

390.—**weeds.** Clothing (see note on *L'Allegro*, 120)—here, the hermit's frock and other garments. Milton used "hairy gown" in *Il Penseroso*, 169. In this line for *weeds* he first wrote *beads*, and the following line read "his books, his hairy gown, or maple dish," as Sampson notes from his examination of the Cambridge MS.

391.—The few possessions permitted by his vow of poverty—books of devotion, a string of beads or rosary for keeping account of his prayers, and a wooden bowl. The bowl is of maple here, but, as Masson notes, the hermit or sage in Milton's sixth Elegy has one of beech.

393.—**Hesperian tree.** The tree with golden boughs and leaves bearing the golden apples, the marriage gift of Juno, guarded by a dragon and in the charge of the Hesperides, maidens with exquisite powers of song, whom Milton makes the daughters of Hesperus (l. 982). The gardens of the Hesperides (so called by the ancients, but called "Hesperian gardens" by Milton) were at the confines of the earth in the west. Milton identifies them with Elysium and the Islands of the Blest (*Paradise Lost*, III, 568, IV, 250). Osgood (whom see in general) notes that but little is said in the classics of the beauty of the Hesperides or of their gardens. The gardens particularly, however, became a stock allusion in modern literature and a set theme (introduced, for example, into several masques) for passages of glowing description, as below, ll. 981 ff. Another description was cut out of the opening speech of the Attendant Spirit after l. 4. See further at note on l. 981.

395.—**with unenchanted eye.** With eyes whose close watch may not be caused to relax through enchantment.

398.—**unsunned.** Kept hidden from the light. Perhaps suggested by the *Faerie Queene*, II, viii, 4 f.

401.—Danger will close his eyes to what Opportunity offers. The suggestion has been made that the use of Desire in place of Danger would have made the passage simpler and clearer, but the personification of Danger as a maleficent being, watchful for a chance to put a person in risk of harm, is far more effective.

404.—**it recks me not.** The impersonal for the direct use "I reckon not of," that is, "am not concerned regarding." Cf. *Lycidas*, 122. This use is not common, but is a natural development like the similar use "it concerns me not," "it does not matter to me."

405.—**dog.** Follow closely and stealthily for a purpose. Note how this line echoes the idea in l. 401.

406.—**ill-greeting.** Addressing or approaching in ill or evil wise.

407.—**unownèd.** Unaccompanied by persons having her in charge, hence unprotected.

408.—**Infer.** Make inference, argue.

411.—**arbitrate the event.** Weigh or pass judgment (as arbiter between hope and fear) upon the possible outcome.

413.—**squint suspicion.** Squint as eyeing things askance in doubt and distrust.

418–431.—The theme of the masque, already referred to in more general terms in another relation by the Lady (ll. 210–212) to the effect that virtue insures fortitude (to use the accepted term of the moralists), as also by the Elder Brother (ll. 366–372), here receives more explicit and forcible expression. Chastity is itself a sure defence (l. 420). In ll. 432–475, the Elder Brother adduces proof for his faith. The entire passage, as Masson says, “is not only a concentrated expression of the moral of the whole masque, but also an exposition of what was a cardinal idea with Milton through his whole life, and perhaps the most central idea of his personal philosophy in early manhood.”

It is because of the familiarity of the fact of Milton’s intimate indebtedness to Spenser that editors have not been at pains to refer specifically to Una and the Lion and her immunity in general from the powers of evil that surround her. The passage in the *Faithful Shepherdess*, cited in illustration of ll. 432–437, in part closely suggests the present passage.

421.—**complete steel.** For the stress in *complete*, see the note on l. 11. The phrase echoes *Hamlet*, I, iv, 52, as editors in general have noted; possibly also, as Warton suggested, Phineas Fletcher’s *Parthenia* (the name means “virgin one”) in the *Purple Island*, X, 27 ff., who is described as “all in steel and gilded arms.”

422.—The nymphs in classical mythology were lesser deities of the woods, mountains, springs, rivers, or of particular localities. They are a familiar poetic convention in English and other literatures, and play a special and important part in the pastoral. The nymphs here referred to are followers of Diana (see l. 441). Like her they are virgin, and like her carry bow and quiver.

423.—**trace**. Pass through or over, traverse; a common Elizabethan use.—**unharbored**. Offering no harbor or shelter.

424.—**Infamous**. Of evil repute; a Latinism. Editors cite Phineas Fletcher, *Piscatorie Eclogues*, I, 14, "Th' infamous woods and downs," and Horace, *Odes*, I, iii, 20, "infames scopulos." The accentuation here used is recorded as late as the eighteenth century, but Milton also uses our present accentuation.

426.—**mountaineer**. One having the savage traits of a dweller in the mountains. Verity cites *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 120, "call'd me traitor, mountaineer."

428.—**very**. True, hence absolute, utter.

429.—**grots**. *Grot*, now only poetical, is from the French word, as *grotto* from the Italian.—**shagged**. Made shaggy; common in poetry of the first half of the seventeenth century.—**horrid shades**. Properly "bristling" or "shaggy" shades ("shades" by metonymy for "woods"), a Latinism not infrequently used from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but here used also with implication of its ordinary meaning.

430.—**unblenched**. Unswerving, that will not swerve or flinch through fear.

432-437.—Milton here cites proof, possibly true, from popular belief. At l. 438 he passes to evidence adduced from the ancient philosophers, "the old schools of Greece," l. 439. This passage seems unquestionably to have been suggested by Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, as pointed out by Newton.

434.—**Blue**. Livid, slate-color; from Old Norse *bla* (whence *blo*, *blæ*, in dialectal use), changed by analogy to similarity with blue, the color of the sky, which is of different derivation.—**meagre**. Thin, lean. The graphic quality of these two epithets is notable.—**stubborn unlaid ghost**. One that walks and will not rest, not having been "laid" or put to rest by the rite of exorcism, the office of the church prescribed for that purpose.

435.—Ghosts were believed to walk from curfew (the legal hour for covering fires according to the old usage, that is, eight or nine o'clock) till cock-crow. The reason is one which belongs to "magic"; hence Milton speaks of the "magic chains" which bind them at other times (*cf.* "each fettered ghost" in *Nativity Ode*, 234).

436.—**swart faëry**. Black elf or gnome. Goblins and spirits who live in the earth (*cf.* *Il Penseroso*, 93 *f.*, *n.*), or, more particularly, in mines, play an important part in folk-lore.

439.—The speaker now appeals to the schools of the philosophers.

441.—**Dian.** The Anglicized form of *Diana*, retained in poetic and general literary use. Diana was the goddess of the moon (hence she is here called “silver-shafted,” perhaps with double reference to the shafts in her quiver) and also of the chase. A virgin goddess, she was fabled to spend her time in hunting with her nymphs, virgin like her, and contemning love (setting at naught the “frivolous bolt of Cupid,” ll. 444 *f.*). *Cf.* ll. 422 *ff.*, *n.*, and l. 340, *n.*

443.—**brinded.** Brindled, streaked, and spotted; probably from *brended*, of a burnt color, whence also *branded*.

444.—**pard.** Panther, leopard.

445.—**frivolous.** Without importance or seriousness; of trifling nature. The word has become more limited in application and less serious in meaning than in Milton’s time.—**bolt of Cupid.** The arrow of the god of love; in a specific sense, a bolt was the arrow used in a cross-bow.

447–449.—Of the three Gorgons, Medusa alone was mortal. Having committed sacrilege in the temple of Minerva, her hair was changed to serpents, which gave her an aspect so terrible that all who beheld her were turned to stone. Perseus slew her, guiding his blows by her reflection in his shield (Benvenuto Cellini’s famous statue will be remembered), and her head was fixed on the shield of Minerva. Osgood notes that Milton follows Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 771 *ff.*

449.—**froze.** This weak preterite here used by Milton first appeared in the Middle English period.—**congealed.** For the stress, see l. 4, *n.*

451.—**dashed.** Abashed, overpowered.

455.—**liveried angels lackey her.** Angels in their heavenly livery attend her as lackeys or servants. The term *lackey* makes it clear that Milton used *livery* in the sense of the distinctive dress of servants, not merely in the sense, still current in his time, of distinctive dress.

458.—**gross.** Lacking delicacy in hearing, dull to what is fine.

459.—**oft.** Frequent.

460.—Milton changed *begins* to *begin* in the MS., that is, from the indicative to the subjunctive, but did not similarly change *turns*, l. 462. Masson may be right in thinking this intentional and designed to imply certain accomplishment of the change.

463-475.—This passage, as Newton first pointed out, is based on Plato, *Phædo*, 81. The passage, in Jowett's translation (third edition, II, 224), is as follows:

"But the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste, and use for the purpose of his lusts,—the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy—do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed?"

Impossible, he replied.

She is held fast by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have wrought into her nature.

Very true.

And this corporeal element, my friend, is heavy and weighty and earthy, and is that element of sight by which a soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because she is afraid of the invisible and of the world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchres, near which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible."

The conception of the body's being changed to the soul's essence in ll. 459-463, through "converse with heavenly habitants," Milton used later in *Paradise Lost*, V, 493.

465.—lavish. Unrestrained, licentious; an obsolete use.

468.—**Imbodies and imbrutes.** Grows to be of a material, not spiritual, nature and becomes brutish.

473.—Each shadow is thought of as sitting by its former body—hence the singular in place of the plural.

474.—**sensuality.** In former use, interchange of the endings *-ty* and *-ity* is common.

476.—This line is an acknowledgment to Plato, from whom the substance of the previous passage is taken.

478.—Editors cite *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, iii, 342 f., "as sweet and musical as bright Apollo's lute," and a similar comparison in Milton's *Tractate of Education*, in which he uses the harp of Orpheus.

479.—**nectared.** Made delicious with or as with nectar, the drink of the gods.

480.—**crude surfeit.** Excess attended by or producing indigestion; a rare Latinism, now obsolete.

483.—**night-foundered.** Sunk or lost in the night like a ship in the sea. *Cf. Paradise Lost, I, 204.*

489.—**Defence is a good cause.** Defence is justified in that case.

490.—**That halloo I should know.** These words would seem properly to belong to the Attendant Spirit, as one of the brothers has just halloosed. The explanation is that a necessary stage direction, given in both MSS., is omitted in Lawes's edition, in both of Milton's, and in subsequent editions. This stage direction, according to Masson, following Todd, ran in the Cambridge MS., "He hallos: the Guardian Dæmon hallos again, and enters in the habit of a shepherd," and in the Bridgewater MS., "He hallos and is answered: the Guardian Dæmon comes in, habited like a shepherd." This makes it clear that the speech is properly accredited to the Elder Brother, who recognizes something familiar in the halloo (the spirit having assumed the guise of a shepherd of his father's), but as a precaution bids him declare himself and menaces him with attack if he come too near. Masson and other editors state incorrectly that the omitted stage direction is in Lawes's edition. See the facsimile.

491.—**iron stakes.** The points of the brothers' swords. The figure seems to be drawn from the use of stakes of iron or iron-pointed in ditches or rivers to impale an enemy, a common device. The word "iron" may be pronounced as two "light" syllables taking the place of a strong stress—*i. e.*, it is a case of resolved stress, or it may be that Milton pronounced it, as in dialectal and sometimes in individual use, as a monosyllable.

494-496.—**Thyrsis.** A traditional name for a shepherd in pastoral literature from Theocritus down. A compliment is here paid to Henry Lawes, the composer of the music of the masque, who played the part.

494.—**artful.** Full of art, composed with art.

495-512.—The recognition of the shepherd and mention of his music is signaled by the use of rime. Similarly, in Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*, rimed verse is used with blank verse for its pastoral suggestion. (Todd, Masson.)

495.—**huddling.** That drives or hurries on with an irregular or uneven pace, hurrying.—**madrigal.** A short love-song or its setting; specifically such a song written in parts to be sung

without instrumental accompaniment. Note that *madrigal* rhymes with *dale*. The use of rime is due to the pastoral character of the reference.

501.—**his next joy.** Both brothers are addressed, the elder as heir, the younger as next in age.

502.—**toy.** A trifling thing as if of value only for amusement or for a time.

503.—**stealth.** That which is stolen.

505.—**downs.** *Down*, in its original sense, means hill; later, a high stretch of open land.

506.—**To.** As compared with.—**care.** Anxiety, anxious thought.

508.—**How chance.** How does it chance; an idiomatic use in which the verb takes no inflection and (see the N. E. D.) almost assumes the character of an adverb, as if, in the present case, "How, by chance, is she not in your company?"

509.—**sadly.** In serious fashion, in earnest, truly.—**without blame.** Without blameworthiness, by no fault (of ours).

511.—**Ay me.** *Ay* is the Middle English interjection *ey*, O, ah. Its use with *me* is probably adopted from or influenced by French *ahi* as in Old French *aymi*, Italian *ahimé*, Spanish *ay de mi*. (N. E. D.)

512.—**Prithee.** A frequent contraction of *pray thee* (tell me).—**shew.** The pronunciation of *shew* as riming with *true* still remains in provincial and old-fashioned use.

515.—**sage poets.** Milton conceived truly great poets to possess a special wisdom imparted through inspiration. They are "sage and solemn" in *Il Penseroso*, 117. They (Milton uses the phrase of himself in *Paradise Lost*, III, 19) are "taught by the Heavenly Muse." The poets Milton has here in mind are Homer, Vergil, Tasso, and Spenser. Here Milton passes directly from the "enchanted isles" to the gate of Hades in the next line, which, on the other hand, is a direct echo of Vergil, *Æneid*, VI, 237-241. Milton's reference is, however, to *isles* in the plural, and may include, as editors have suggested, the "Wandering Islands" of *The Faerie Queene*, II, xii.

519.—Milton is surely not merely pretending seriousness of belief here; the world of classical myth had, whether in a literal or symbolic sense, become real to him.

520.—**navel.** Central point; a diminutive of *nave*, the hub of a wheel.

526.—**murmurs.** Murmured spells or incantations.

529.—**unmoulding reason's mintage.** Milton's word "unmoulding," though from a literal point of view inappropriate—coins are stamped with a die—felicitously suggests the melting of a coin and its loss, by that means, of its impress.

530.—**Charâctered.** Incised or stamped with characters or figures, marked. Both noun and verb are common in Elizabethan English, but the verb is obsolete or archaic now.

531.—**crofts.** Pieces of land closed in from rough open land for tillage or pasture: here, probably, bits of natural pasture as occurring among the woods or rocks of the hills.

532.—**brow.** Overhang, as a brow the face.—**bottom glade.** Valley of low-lying land. *Bottom*, in the sense of an alluvial flat, is used dialectically both in England and America. Its use attributively, as here, is unusual.

533.—**monstrous rout.** Rout of monsters. See *Stage direction* after l. 92, *n.*

534.—**stabled wolves.** The phrase may perhaps mean "wolves in their lairs," if the use of *stabled* here is similar to that in *Paradise Lost*, XI, 752, where sea-monsters are spoken of as stabling in the palaces overwhelmed by the Flood. Its use in that passage may, however, be merely a special figurative use, and Milton may here refer to wolves in the sheepfold (editors cite Vergil's third Eclogue, 80, *triste lupus stabulis*, a wolf is grievous in the fold), which would parallel "tigers at their prey." Or it is remotely possible that it refers to wolves caught by being shut in the fold into which they have gone in search of prey. The comparison involved may have been suggested, as Todd noted, to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, 405, "longis Hecaten ululantibus orat," as the rout of Comus do "abhorrèd rites to Hecate" in their secret haunts—which would support the first interpretation.

535.—**Doing abhorrèd rites.** This use of *do*, to perform (a ceremony), goes back to the Anglo-Saxon period, though perhaps originally derived, or continuously taken over, from the Latin.—**Hecate.** See note on l. 135.

536.—**obscurèd.** Made obscure (with a view to secrecy), hidden from sight. This somewhat special use is made clear and emphasized by the parallel phrase "inmost bowers."

537.—**baits.** Enticements, lures; a figurative use of *bait* in its original sense of food offered to attract fish or other animals. There are natural enticements, in addition to which they use the power of magic in their "guileful spells."

539.—**unwitting.** Not knowing (their true character or what they mean).

540.—**by then.** By the time that. The original phrase "by the time that" was shortened to "by then that," "by then," and "by that."

541.—**herb.** Herbage.

542.—**knot-grass.** One of various grasses, so called as having knotty stalks or stems; here probably the edible grasses of several varieties called "false oats."—**besprent.** Besprinkled; past participle from the obsolete verb *bespreng*.

546.—**melancholy.** See the prefatory note to *L'Allegro*.

547.—**meditate.** Practise, exercise. See *Lycidas*, 66, *n.*

548.—**ere a close.** Ere the close or cadence of a measure.

551.—**listened them.** The original construction (with a dative case) with *hearken*, *listen*, *hear*, now usual only with *hear* ("I heard him through").

553.—**drowsy-frighted.** Lawes's edition and the two editions published in Milton's lifetime read "drowsie frighted." The Cambridge MS. reads "drowsy frighted." The claims of both readings, or variants of them, have been urged as follows:

1.—*drowsy frighted.* The three early editions so read. The steeds which draw the litter of Sleep are characteristically "drowsy," but at the moment they are "frighted" by the uproar of Comus and his crew. But this reading may be due simply to an error in Lawes's edition, and its correctness in view of the violent conjunction of opposed ideas is improbable, especially as compared with (4).

2.—*drowsy-frighted* (with a hyphen). There is no gain, but rather the reverse, in the slight modification of meaning ("in a drowsy fright").

3.—*drowsy-freighted*, that is, "drawing a drowsy freight." This reading is of the "ingenious" order and unwarranted.

4.—*drowsy-frighted.* This is the reading of Milton's original MS., except that (as must often be done) a hyphen is inserted. Editors note that the compound adjective is distinctively Miltonic in character, and that there can be but little question that Milton had in mind the following passage in 2. *Henry VI*, IV, i, 3-6:

And now loud-howling wolves arouse the jades
That drag the tragic melancholy night;
Who with their drowsy, slow, and flagging wings
Clip dead men's graves.

This reading is in every way preferable.

554.—**litter.** A bed or couch with curtains designed to be drawn or carried. "Close-curtained" is a reminiscence, probably of "curtained sleep" (applied to the old canopied bed) in *Macbeth*, II, i, 51, and "spread thy close curtain, night," in *Romeo and Juliet*, III, ii, 5. Milton's figure, creating a litter for sleep corresponding with the chariot of Phœbus by day, is in general his own, but rests, as Osgood notes, on various references in the classics to the chariot of Night, Sleep as driving the horses of Night, and the chariot of the Moon.

555-562.—Note the Shakespearean movement of ll. 557-560. Masson notes that the "quaintly daring fancy, partly repeated in *Paradise Lost*, IV, 604," rather disturbed the eighteenth-century critics, Warton venturing to say, "The conceit in both passages is unworthy the poet." A conceit it may be, but of the sort that justifies itself as the purest poetry.

556.—**steam of . . . perfumes.** *Steam* is misprinted *stream* in the second, and hence in other editions. Todd cites a parallel (in which the same comparison is used, but reversed) from the forty-sixth essay of Bacon, "And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight, than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air."

562.—**the ribs of Death.** The image is probably derived from a wood-cut in Quarles's Emblems, picturing a child (the soul) within the ribs of a skeleton (typifying death), with the motto (*Romans*, vii, 24), "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

573.—**prevent.** Come before, anticipate.

575.—**such two.** As we should say "such and such persons."

578.—**sprung.** A preterite due to use of the participle in place of the true preterite *sprang*, now no longer possible in good usage. Compare *drunk* for *drank*, *sung* for *sang*, etc.

583.—**confidence.** The word is used here in a legitimate, but unusual, if not indeed isolated, sense, namely, "that on which confidence may be based, the grounds or substance of confidence."

585.—**period.** Sentence; the original meaning of the word, as derived from the Greek, is a "circuit" or "cycle," hence, in a rhetorical connection, a sentence of some length and of more or less elaborate form.

587-592.—The theme of the masque is again enunciated—here with a further corollary concerning evil (ll. 593-597), which differs from, but is consonant with, that in the speech of the Lady, ll. 217 ff., and of the First Brother, ll. 420 ff.

592.—**happy trial.** Happy in its outcome, and therefore not to be regarded as grievous, but fortunate.

598.—**pillared firmament.** Editors cite in parallel *Paradise Regained*, IV, 455, "the pillared frame of heaven," and Job, xxvi, 11, "the pillars of heaven tremble." References in the classics to the pillars which bear up heaven might readily be added.

603.—**grisly.** Inspiring terror; used characteristically in Milton's time and earlier (sometimes still) of ghostly things. Spenser was fond of the word.

604.—**the sooty flag of Acheron.** One of the five rivers of the Lower World (see Osgood, s. v. *Rivers of Hell*, and read Milton's description of them in *Paradise Lost*, II, 574-584), here used by metonymy for Hell itself. The phrase "sooty flag" may possibly have been suggested by Phineas Fletcher's *Locusts*, "All hell run out, and sooty flags display."

605.—**Harpies and Hydras.** The Harpies were loathsome winged monsters described by Vergil (*Æneid*, III, 216 ff.) as seizing the food of Æneas and his followers. The Hydra was the many-headed monster slain by Hercules; Milton uses the word in the plural to include such monsters in general. His association of them with Hell (compare also *Paradise Lost*, II, 627 f., and see Osgood) seems referable to Vergil's description of them (*Æneid*, VI, 286 ff.) as stationed at the mouth of Hades.

606.—**Ind.** An Anglicized form of French *Inde*, retained in poetic use (cf. *Dian*, l. 441, n.).

607.—**purchase.** Spoils, booty; a sense common in Elizabethan English. Cf. *Richard III*, III, vii, 186, "Made prize and purchase of his wanton eye."

608.—**curls.** Curled locks are attributed to Comus as conventionally characteristic (from classic times) of votaries of pleasure.

610, 611.—**yet.** Still, as certainly. The sense is, "I love thy courage and bold emprise (high-spirited eagerness to undertake this task) quite as surely and certainly (despite the fact I go on to state, namely), but here thy sword can give thee little aid." Modern editions (even one which gives the meaning of

yet approximately as above) punctuate with a semicolon in place of a comma after *emprise*. The comma seems preferable.

611.—**do thee little stead.** Render thee little aid; *do* is similarly used now only with *service, good, honor, harm, etc.*

614.—**bare wand.** Mere wand, wand alone.—**unthread thy joints.** Render the joints powerless by destroying the “threads” that bind and move them, namely, the ligaments and tendons. The idea is that of destroying all power of motion, and the completeness with which Comus can do this is indicated by the further phrase in the next line, “and crumble all thy sinews,” (*i. e.*, nerves, as also in l. 660).

619.—**a certain shepherd lad.** Milton probably had in thought here his well-beloved friend, Charles Diodati, who was both a physician and a botanist. He addresses him in the *Canzone*, inscribed the first *Elegy* to him, and in the *Epitaphium Damonis* referred to himself and friend as “Thyrsis et Damon, ejusdem viciniae pastores, eadem studia sequuti, a pueritia amici erant, ut qui plurimum.” In this poem he refers to Diodati’s knowledge of plants and their healing properties.

620.—**Of small regard to see to.** Of small consequence to look upon.

621.—**virtuous.** Having virtue or power.

626.—**scrip.** A bag.

627.—**simples.** Herbs used medicinally; so called as individually efficacious in some single malady.

628.—**faculties.** Special powers.

630–633.—Verity calls attention to the awkward succession of “but’s” in these lines.

633.—A subject has to be supplied for *bore*.

635.—**clouted.** Patched, or, possibly, hobnailed.—**shoon.** Shoes; an *-en* plural like *oxen*.

638.—**Hæmony.** Probably coined from a classical name for Thessaly as a land of magic, *Hæmonia*. Osgood calls attention also to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII, 159 ff., 264 f. The word as a name for a plant comparable with moly is Milton’s invention.

640.—**mildew-blast.** The use of *blast* in the sense of *blight* came from the belief that mildew was due to the blowing upon a thing of an evil spirit. An idea of similar kind (but without supernatural suggestion) is bound up in *damp*, a noxious air or exhalation, as in *fire-damp*.

642.—**little reckoning.** Supply “of it.”

646.—**lime-twigs.** Limed twigs; twigs smeared with bird-lime to catch birds.

655.—**sons of Vulcan.** Commonly referred, says Osgood, to Vergil, *Æneid*, VIII, 191 ff., where Cacus is described as a son of Vulcan. The plural use may be similar to that of "Hydras and Chimæras dire." See 517, 605, *nn.* But, according to Vergil and Ovid, there were other sons than Cacus.

Stage direction. The scene was changed presumably by the "traverse" or screen usually employed for the purpose.—**puts by.** Refuses by pushing aside, or by a gesture as if so doing.—**goes about to rise.** Sets about rising.

660.—**nerves.** Sinews; an etymologic sense.

661.—Daphne, beloved by Apollo and fleeing from him, was saved by being turned into a laurel-tree by her father, Peneus; hence, according to the fable, the use of the laurel to crown poets.

664.—**corporal rind.** Shell or hull of the body (as enclosing the soul). Compare the Teutonic and Celtic conception of the body as a garment, and later figurative references to it as a tenement of clay.

665.—**while.** While Heaven sees fit to permit it.

672.—**cordial julep.** *Cordial* is here used in its original medicinal sense, "having power to refresh or invigorate the heart," whence the noun. *Julep*, also, is used in its original sense of a sirup of water and sugar, but in the further limited sense of a medicinal drink of mildly invigorating character. The word in its Persian form means rose-water.

675.—**Nepenthes.** A drug which made end of all pain, sorrow, and anger, given to Menelaus by Helen, daughter of Jove, his wife, who obtained it of Polydamna, wife of Thôn, a woman of Egypt. See the *Odyssey*, IV, 219-230.

681.—**delicacy.** Luxuriousness, pleasurable indulgence.

682.—**covenants.** Agreements or contracts implied by her trust.

685.—**unexempt condition.** Condition or article, that was not left out or "exempt" in the covenant.

688.—The antecedent of *that*, as the verb shows, is the *you* of ll. 682, 684.

698.—**vizored.** Wearing a vizor, and hence disguised.

700.—**lickerish.** Pleasant to the taste, tempting; with a suggestion also of *lickerous*, pleasant, hence enticing, evil. The two words had a similar development.

701.—**Juno**. The wife of Jupiter, and, moreover, the pattern of virtue among the gods.

707.—**budge**. Pretentiously solemn; pompous. The etymology is obscure; N. E. D. suggests comparison with *bug*, *bog*, *boggish*, in the same sense, and possible association with *budge*, a kind of fur with the wool dressed outward, sometimes used with a depreciatory or contemptuous implication. Milton, having in mind the scholastic furred gowns or hoods (*budge* was used at Cambridge for hoods, according to Todd, at least in the fifteenth century), may have coined the phrase “budge doctors” intending to suggest contemptuously the budge bachelors so called, a company of poor old men dressed in gowns of budge, who attended the Lord Mayor in the procession on Lord Mayor’s Day.—**the Stoic fur**. A figurative use of the furs appropriated to distinguish special academic rank, degrees, or subject. A leading principle of the Stoic and of the Cynic philosophy was renunciation of the pleasures of the senses.

708.—**the Cynic tub**. Of Diogenes, the leading exponent of the Cynic philosophy, who, according to the story, in rebuke of ostentation and pride, made his home in a tub.

711.—**unwithdrawing hand**. Not drawing back or ceasing its gifts.

714.—**curious**. Careful in choice; hence difficult to please.

716.—**smooth-haired silk**. Not rough like wool or linen fibre.

718.—**her own loins**. The earth is considered as the body of productive nature.

719.—**hutched**. Stored as in a hutch or chest.—**all-worshipped ore**. Gold.

721.—**pet**. A sudden fit of ill-humor.—**pulse**. Dried peas or beans as used for cooking or as cooked.

722.—**frieze**. A kind of coarse woollen cloth rough in finish on one side: used allusively as worn characteristically by the poor.

725.—**as a grudging master**. As if he were a grudging master.

728.—**surcharged**. Overweighted.

732-736.—This passage is a conceit of the gorgeously hyperbolic kind. The meaning is as follows: The sea “o’erfraught” (overfreighted, loaded down with its multitudes) passes its banks and discovers the “unsought” diamonds (that is, those unknown to men) where they lie in the earth, which thereupon emblaze the forehead of the encroaching flood, and there serve

as if stars, so that "they below" (the inhabitants of the deep) grow "inured to light" and thus, in a way contrary to their nature, come at last to gaze upon the sun itself without averting their gaze, shamed by its brilliance, as before.

The meaning, in a somewhat different form, comes out more clearly in the original MS. version. The term "centre," it may be premised, is presumably used elliptically, as elsewhere by Milton and by poets of the period, for "centre of the earth."

The sea o'erfraught would heave her waters up
Above the shore, and the unsought diamonds
Would so bestud the centre with their starlight . . .

745.—**brag.** Boast, that which Nature may boast of.

748, 749.—**homely . . . home.** Not a play on words, as editors are careful to note. *Comus* merely appeals to the etymology.

750.—**of sorry grain.** Poor or inferior in point of color.—*Grain* in the sense of dye (hence color) is due to the old error of supposing the dried bodies of cochineal insects, as imported, to be the seeds or berries of a plant, which they closely resemble. Compare the etymology of *cochineal*, *crimson*, *vermilion*.

750, 751.—**ply the sampler.** Work the sampler, or set piece of embroidery formerly embroidered by girls as a sample or proof of their skill with the needle.—**tease.** Card or comb with teasels (heads of a certain kind of thistle armed with stiff hooked barbs). The reader will note the striking use of metonymy in this passage, complexions and cheeks being spoken of as plying the sampler and teasing the wool.

751.—**huswife.** A variant of *housewife*; compare *husband*.

752.—**vermeil-tinctured.** Tinctured with vermilion.

755.—**Think what.** Supply "that is."

756.—**to have unlocked.** The use of the perfect infinitive after a past tense, logically incorrect, is still frequent, more especially in British English.

758.—To deceive my judgment, as he did my eyes by his disguise.

759.—**Obtruding.** Thrusting forward or urging (something objectionable or not desired).—**pranked.** Decked out.

760.—**I hate.** I hate it.—**bolt.** Sift out, examine as by sifting. The figure is drawn from the "bolting" or sifting of flour.

761.—**pride.** Arrogant assumption.

767.—**spare Temperance.** Sparing or moderate.

768–779.—Editors point out the parallel passages, perhaps in Milton's mind, in *Lear*, III, iv, 33–36; IV, i, 73 *f.*

770.—**lewdly.** In a manner characterized by loose indulgence.

773.—**In unsuperfluous even proportion.** In even shares, not giving an unnecessary amount to any one.

780.—**enow.** Enough. *Enow* came from the inflected, *enough* from the uninflected forms of A. S. *genoh*. The form *enow* was usual with plurals.

785.—**notion.** Idea. The word is now cheapened in meaning through familiar use.

790.—**dear.** Hard to come by, forced.—**gay.** Showy, pretentious.

791.—**fence.** Use of the sword in fencing, art or practice of fencing: used figuratively.

797.—**brute earth.** Brutish or insensate earth; an echo of Horace's *bruta tellus* (*Odes*, I, xxxiv, 9).—**nerves.** Sinews.

800.—**fables.** Speaks falsely, fabricates.

802.—**dew.** Sweat; so still in "dews of death."

803.—**Dips.** Suffuses or covers with moisture as if by dipping into a liquid.—**wrath of Jove.** Against his father, Saturn, and against the giants or Titans. Jove, by means of his thunder-bolts ("speaks thunder") hurled the Titans down to the underworld.

807.—**direct.** Directed.

808.—**canon laws of our foundation.** First principles or essential rules on which our existence is based.

810.—**melancholy blood.** Blood affected by preponderance of "melancholy," one of the four "humors" (blood, choler, phlegm, and melancholy) which, according to the old medical theory, determined by their relative proportion at any time the mental and physical condition of a person. Melancholy was said to sink like lees in wine in the blood and corrupt it (so Nash, in his *Terrors of the Night*, cited by Todd).

816, 817.—Such a reversal of spells in both actions and words is the characteristic mode in magic to dissever or break a charm.

822.—**Melibœus.** A stock name for a shepherd in pastoral poetry derived from Vergil's first Eclogue. The reference here is to Spenser (*Faerie Queene*, II, x, st. 14–19), not, as is sometimes said, to Geoffrey of Monmouth, who first told the story of Sabrina.

823.—**sootheſt.** Trueſt, moſt truſtworthy.

825.—**curb.** Curb bit, not our colloquial “curb” for curb-rein; compare l. 887.

827.—**Whilom.** Once on a while.

828.—**Brute.** A descendant of Æneas who, according to Celtic and, by appropriation, English, tradition, landed in Britain and became the forefather of the British people.

830.—Milton alters the ſtory. Guendolen was not Sabrina’s ſtep-dame. In the original, in Geoffrey of Monmouth (and in Milton’s own *History of Britain*), Guendolen makes war upon Lochrine, the king, who has put her aſide for the worthless Eſtrildis, Sabrina’s mother, and throws Eſtrildis and Sabrina into the river, which thereafter bears Sabrina’s name in commemoration. By his changes and by ſaying nothing of Eſtrildis, he makes Sabrina a more nearly perfect type of innocence for his purpoſe, and heightens the pathos of her fate.

834.—**pearlêd.** Commentators have endeavored to juſtify or to explain Milton’s references to pearls, to Nereus (l. 835), to coral (l. 886), in connection with an English river. But theſe adornments are traditionally appropriate to ſea-nymphs, and were uſed by Drayton in deſcribing Sabrina (*Polyolbion*, V, 13 ff.).

835.—**aged Nereus.** One of the more important of the ſea-gods under Neptune. He is called the “Ancient One” by Homer (*Iliad*, XVIII, 141) and *grandævus* by Vergil. His kindneſs to Sabrina is in accordance with the juſt and gentle character aſcribed to him by Heſiod. See Osgood, *s. v.*, “ſea-gods.”

836.—**lank.** Languid, drooping; a rare, perhaps an individual uſe.

837.—**imbathe.** To place in a bath; the prefix has ſomewhat the effect of an intensive, “to bathe with care or with a ſpecial purpoſe.”

838.—**nectared lavers.** Perfumed bathing veſſels. Milton, as Osgood points out, drew the ſuggeſtion of perfume in connection with nectar, the drink of the gods, from the classics, and hence his uſe of *nectar* in the ſenſe of an ointment (*Death of a Fair Infant*, 49, and *Lycidas*, 175) may be explained.—**asphodel.** A liliaceous plant tranſmuted by the classic poets into the deathleſs flower that covered the fields of Elyſium. A variant of the derived modern word gave us (how is unknown, but poſſibly owing to French *fleur d’affodil*) our plant name *daffodil*.

839.—The eyes, mouth, nostrils, and ears. Editors point out the reminiscence of *Hamlet*, I, v, 63, “the porches of mine ears.”

840.—**ambrosial**. Immortal. See 16, *n*.

845.—**urchin blasts**. The word *urchin*, meaning properly a hedgehog, came to be applied to imps and elves, as supposed to take that shape, and was hence applied humorously to small children, especially boys, giving the sense in which we most commonly meet it. Here the sense is “elfish blasts.” For *blasts*, see l: 640, *n*.

846.—**shrewd**. Malicious; an obsolete sense.

858.—**adjuring**. That serves to call or invoke.

863.—**amber-dropping**. Dropping perfume as of ambergris (the original meaning of amber). When *amber* came to be applied to the fossil resin, its original meaning was specially indicated by the addition of *gris*, gray. Ambergris is a waxy substance, a morbid secretion of the whale found floating or in the whale's body. It is of great value in making perfumes and was originally also used in cookery.

868.—**Oceanus**. The god of the ocean-stream fabled to girdle the earth. The epithet “great,” as Osgood notes, is applied to him by Homer and Hesiod. Note the change to rime.

869.—**mace**. The trident. Milton may have taken the word *mace* from Drayton's *Polyolbion*, XI, 104.

870.—**Tethys**. The wife of Oceanus.

871.—**wrinkled**. As being the “Ancient One” of the sea.

872.—**the Carpathian wizard's hook**. Proteus. Milton styles him wizard, or “wise man;” because he is referred to as a *vates*, or soothsayer, by Vergil and Ovid. Milton speaks of his hook because he was the shepherd of the flocks, namely the seals, of Neptune (Ben Jonson calls him the “shepherd of the seas” in the *Fortunate Isles*). He is called “Carpathian,” as dwelling in the Carpathian sea, named from the island of Carpathos between Crete and Rhodes. The line is sometimes referred to as an example of the occasionally recondite character of Milton's allusions.

873.—**Triton**. A sea-monster and divinity with a forked fish's tail (hence “scaly”). He blows upon the twisted shell to summon the deities of the sea in his capacity as the herald of Neptune.

874.—**Glaucus**. A fisherman who became immortal by means of an herb and was changed to a sea-god. He was a

soothsayer, according to classic tradition. Compare Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, IV, xi, 3, as noted by Osgood.

875, 876.—**Leucothea.** A mortal, Ino, wife of Athamas, who, in terror lest Athamas in his madness should slay herself and her remaining son as he had the other, plunged with him into the sea, where they became divinities, Ino under the name of Leucothea, and her son under the name of Palæmon, or, in Latin, Portumnus, god of harbors. Homer speaks of her fair ankles and of her hands.

877.—**Thetis.** A Nereid, mother of Achilles. Milton's "tinsel-footed" is an adaptation of Homer's "silver-footed."

878.—See l. 253 and *n.*

Stage direction. **rises.** Probably through a trap, a device frequently used in masques. The play from now on is pure masque and in a metre characteristic of the masque.

893.—**azurn.** A rare, perhaps individual use on Milton's part, of *azure* parallel to *leathern*, *silvern*, for *leather*, *silver*.

895.—Milton is not referring to actual precious stones. Sabrina is speaking of her sliding chariot, namely, the river itself. The precious stones that "stray" in the channel figure the changeful colors of the water, agate, the azure sheen of turquoise, and emerald. She steps, as she says in the next line, from the sliding waters fleet, where they pause in the eddying back-water by the bank.

897.—**printless feet.** From the *Tempest*, V, i, 34. The idea, frequently used by poets, has its general origin in Vergil's description of Camilla, *Æneid*, VII, 808.

898.—**velvet head.** From Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, one of the sources of Milton's inspiration.

904.—**band.** Bond.

913.—**precious cure.** Precious power to cure.

914.—Touching of eyes, ears, lips, etc., frequently appears as essential to a charm. Jonson, for example, uses it in the *Fortunate Isles*, which may have been the special suggestion of its use to Milton.

916.—**seat.** The poisoned chair in which the Lady sits.

917.—**heat.** Quality, specific property: an obsolete sense.

921.—**Amphitrite.** The wife of Neptune, Sabrina being represented as one of her ladies-in-waiting.

923.—**Anchises' line.** Locrine was the son of Brutus (see l. 828, *n.*) and hence sprung through Silvius, Ascanius, and Æneas, from Anchises.

927.—**snowy hills.** Of Wales.

928.—**singèd air.** As if itself burned with heat.

932, 933.—See l. 834, *n.*

934-937.—“May thy lofty source be crowned with towers and terraces, and here and there upon thy banks may thou be crowned with groves of myrrh and cinnamon,” that is, groves of spicy perfume as if of myrrh and cinnamon.

Stage direction. Country Dancers. Masquers taking part in a contra-dance, in which the dancers stand opposite each other in lines. Our Virginia Reel is a contra or “country” dance.

960.—**duck or nod.** The bobbed courtesies and bowings characteristic of a rustic dance.

962.—**court guise.** Fashion of the court.

963.—Osgood points out (*s. v. Hermes*) that while no specific authority can be quoted for this passage the classics support it by implication.

964.—**mincing.** Moving daintily.—**Dryades.** The nymphs of the woods.

965.—**lawns and . . . leas.** Pastures and meadows.

972.—**assays.** Trials, here probably in the concrete sense of “that which tries, afflictions, tribulations,” as elsewhere in Milton.

Stage direction. Dances. The series of dances for which the dramatic portion of a masque affords a setting.

976.—Ariel’s song in *The Tempest*, V, i, 88, is usually cited as a parallel to this passage.

980.—**liquid.** Clear (like clear water), a Latinism, from the use of *liquidus* in poetry, still used in this phrase, but with *liquid* generally understood as meaning “easily flowing.”

981-983.—See l. 393, *n.*

984.—**crispèd.** According to N. E. D. of uncertain sense as applied to trees. Herrick uses it of the yew. Milton’s use is poetically suggestive, merely, no doubt, rather than definite. The physical sense is “curled,” used of the hair, but it was also early used of surfaces covered with waves or ripples. That the figure is, however, definitely that of “curled,” used of the hair, seems clear from the fact that Drayton (*Polyolbion*, V, 231) speaks of the “curlèd top” of Narber, a forest nymph.

985.—**spruce.** Originally “finely dressed in a modish way.” The word bettered in meaning, and Milton uses it to convey an impression of neatness and freshness. It implies now a rather unrefined smartness and tidiness of appearance.

986.—The Graces, traditionally three, though Homer does not limit the number, were goddesses who had the power of bestowing upon others the graces of beauty and personal charm which they themselves embody. They are frequently associated in the classics with the Hours which, as Osgood notes, are associated in Homer with all the seasons, but by later classical writers, whom Milton follows, with Spring and the flowers. "Rosy-bosomed" refers to their glowing beauty.

989.—**musky**. Used, as also nard and cassia below, merely allusively, not literally, to suggest rare and delicious perfume.

990.—**cedarn**. See l. 893, *n*.

991.—**Nard**. The aromatic plant which yielded the ointment of the same name used by the ancients. The word is ultimately of Oriental origin. It appears as the main element of the compound *spikenard*.—**cassia**. A plant producing an inferior kind of cinnamon, the *Cinnamomum cassia* of botanists.

992.—See l. 83, *n*.

993.—**blow**. Bear; a transitive use of *blow*, blossom.

995.—**purfled**. Banded, though *purfled* really means edged or bordered. The term is still used of an edging of inlay on an instrument or elsewhere.

999.—See *Nativity Ode*, 204. In the Greek myth Adonis is loved by Aphrodite. Milton refers to the Oriental myth in "Assyrian queen," l. 1002.

1003, 1004.—**far above**. . . **advanced**. Cupid and Psyche serve to typify a higher type of love. In the late classical myth (or perhaps allegory), Psyche (who, as her name indicates, typifies the soul), because of her extraordinary beauty, was ordered by Venus, through jealousy, to be exposed upon a mountain. Cupid rescues her and makes her his wife, coming to her, in the beautiful palace he provides, by night, so that she does not know who her husband is. Her sisters visit her and advise her to steal a look at her husband while he sleeps, in spite of his orders, lest he might be a monster. She does so, beholds the divinely beautiful god, but unfortunately awakens him by a drop of burning oil from her lamp. She wanders over the earth mourning his loss, and is followed by the continued hatred of Venus, who imposes upon her a series of impossible labors which she performs by miraculous help. Finally at Cupid's prayer Jupiter makes her immortal and they are reunited. Osgood notes that in our source for the myth, Apuleius, Cupid

and Psyche have but one child, Voluptas, while Milton gives them two (ll. 1010, 1011).

1012.—**smoothly.** Successfully, skilfully.

1015.—The bowed or bent welkin is imagined as curving less at the extremes of the earth, where it is more like a vertical wall.

1017.—**corners.** The horns of the moon; perhaps borrowed from *Macbeth*, III, v, 23.

1021.—**sphery chime.** The music of the spheres, here, by metonymy, for the spheres or stars themselves.

VII. LYCIDAS

Lycidas was written in 1637, and published in Cambridge in 1638 in a volume containing thirty-six poems in Greek, Latin, and English, in memory of Edward King, who was drowned in the Irish Sea, August 10, 1637. Edward King was Fellow of Christ's College at the time of his death, and greatly admired and loved, as these tributes prove. The original manuscript, and a copy of the 1638 edition, with corrections by Milton, are preserved at Cambridge. A number of revisions appear in the edition of 1645, and still a few more in that of 1673. They illustrate in an instructive way Milton's care in perfecting his work.

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy. An elegy is a poem lamenting the death of a person and paying tribute to his memory. The writing of such poems had long been customary in England, and not a few, in imitation of famous classical elegies, had been written in the pastoral mode. A pastoral is a poem in imitation of the songs of shepherds, or, in a later development, a narrative poem of country life with shepherds and rustic folk as the characters. The famous Greek writers of pastoral, Theocritus and Moschus, and, in Latin, Vergil, who copied the Greek pastoral closely, were more or less faithful in picturing the real country, even though they idealized it somewhat and sometimes represented themselves, their friends, or some current event, in these poems allegorically. Their pastorals were imitated by Italian, French, Spanish, and English poets of the Renaissance, to whom the mode was wholly an artificial, though charming, convention. These later pastorals portray, most of them, an entirely imaginary country life of ideal happiness and contentment, simplicity and homely virtues, where shepherds

spend their time tending their sheep and singing in contests of skill or in praise of the happiness of their lives or of the lovely shepherdesses who have conquered their hearts. Elements originally foreign to the mode were added—characters from classic mythology, knights, magicians, and lovely ladies from the romances, witches, spells, and superstitions from native folk-lore. The mode was used in prose romances and in plays as well as in poems. In England the fashion of the pastoral, which was at its height from 1580 to 1590, was set by Spenser's *Shepherds' Calendar* and Sidney's prose romance, the *Arcadia*. It persisted into the seventeenth century, and so general was its use that we find it employed in most curious ways—for example, Phineas Fletcher gave his poem on the human body, *The Purple Island*, a pastoral setting.

The use of the pastoral form for an elegy may at first seem strange, but, in point of fact, Theocritus and Moschus, and after them Vergil had done this, and Milton might well follow them, even though he might not observe a similar degree of fidelity and appropriateness to the demands of the form. He did not do so—especially in the famous passage, ll. 108–131, in which he arraigned the evils in the Church. For the artistic unfitness of this passage it is not possible to offer apology—that Milton felt it is shown by the sub-title of the poem. The bonds of the pastoral were, to be sure, of the loosest: one might take what liberty one willed, and, as has been shown, Milton's master, Spenser, had set forth the contest between Catholicism and Protestantism in the *Shepherds' Calendar*, and Phineas Fletcher had attacked the "corrupted clergy" in his *Piscatory Eclogues*. The true justification of the passage, however, is the fact that it is an outburst of passionate personal feeling. In any case we could ill spare it, whatever academic objections may be brought against it. Another charge against the poem is its awkward collocation of matters Christian and pagan. Milton's characteristic freedom in this regard has been treated in the *Introduction*; there was nothing repugnant in such a collocation to Milton's critical taste or that of Milton's time, whether in pastoral poetry or elsewhere. The charge, that one cannot feel *Lycidas* to be an expression of true feeling, that too much of Milton himself appears in it, merits a brief word. We really do not know how well Milton knew Edward King. He may merely have been asked to contribute to a volume in honor of a fellow-collegian whose distinguished abilities and untimely

death made a general expression of feeling appropriate. If this is true, the usual reply that the poem is primarily a work of art is quite sufficient.

Lycidas marks unmistakably an advance in Milton's poetic power. With due allowance for the fact that *Comus* is a longer poem, that its inspiration must needs flag now and again under stress of its didactic purpose, and with clearest recognition of its noble beauty throughout, the admission must still be made that in perfection of form, combined sweetness and majesty of movement, the essentially concrete, purely poetic, character of its imagery and diction, even in its polemic passage, *Lycidas* is supreme. It is, as Tennyson termed it, a "touchstone of poetic taste."

Title. Milton selects for Edward King, as the elegy is in the form of a pastoral, the name *Lycidas*, found as a shepherd's name in Theocritus, *Idyls*, VII, and in Vergil, *Eclogues*, IX. The MS. was originally entitled simply "*Lycidas*: Novemb. 1637." In the edition of 1645, the title was altered to its present form.

Monody. A lyric ode, so called as supposed to be sung by a single voice, among modern poets, as here, an elegy or dirge.

1-6.—**once more.** Milton refers to the fact that he had written little or no verse since *Comus* in 1634. He pictures his return to poetry figuratively by representing himself as coming to pluck the berries and leaves of the laurel, myrtle, and ivy, plants associated directly or indirectly with poetry—the laurel because poets were crowned with it, the myrtle as sacred to Venus, the ivy as sacred to Bacchus. The reference to his coming "before the mellowing year" and disturbing their "season due" (plucking them out of proper season) indicates that Milton, as when he wrote *Comus*, still felt that he was not yet fully prepared for the high service of poetry. Note, however, also the time of the year of King's death.

3.—**crude.** Unripe.

5.—**Shatter.** Throw into confusion in the act of picking.

10.—Imitated from Vergil, *Eclogues*, X, 2, 3, "*neget quis carmina Gallo.*"—**He knew.** Edward King had written Latin verse, which is extant, and perhaps other verse which Milton had seen. The omission of *how* before the infinitive is frequent in Elizabethan English and is still used in poetic diction.

11.—In the MS. Milton used the correct spelling, *rime*.

13.—**welter**. Toss or roll irregularly.—**parching**. Edward King's body is conceived of as weltering on the sea, then thrown on shore, then carried away again by the tide. (See l. 154 and note.) The wind parches the body as it lies on the sand.

14.—**melodious tear**. A notable example of poetic ellipsis.

15-22.—These lines, forming the invocation, are modelled upon Theocritus, *Idyls*, I, 64.

15.—**Sisters of the sacred well**. Milton is here following Hesiod in the opening of his *Theogony*, who describes the Muses as dancing about the dark spring of Aganippe on Mount Helicon, and about the altar of the mighty son of Chronos, Milton's "seat of Jove." See Osgood, *s. v. Muses*. Milton, as Verity notes, invented the source of the spring as beneath the altar.

19.—**Muse**. Here used for poet.

20.—**lucky**. Offering good wishes.—**urn**. Urns were used by the ancients to hold the ashes of the dead.

22.—**shroud**. Sometimes explained as the *shroud* meaning shelter, but usually interpreted as the winding-sheet.

23-36.—This imagery, appropriate to the pastoral form, must be taken merely as general in its reference. Edward King and the poet were together in Christ's College, both were engaged in study. The detail is merely incidental to the pastoral style and not specific.

26.—The metaphor, as Verity notes, is one used by many poets before and since Milton. The MS. and edition of 1638 have *glimmering* in place of *opening*.

27.—**drove**. That is, "drove our flocks."

28.—**gray-fly**. The precise fly meant is uncertain. The dor-bug, which flies after sunset, has been suggested.

30.—The evening star is meant, though it does not rise. Compare *Comus*, 93, *n*.

32-36.—While the details of this description are largely conventional, this passage may refer, as Verity suggests, to the activity of Cambridge in poetry at this time.

33.—See *Comus*, 345, *n*.

34.—**Fauns**. The Latin name for the Satyrs, a name originally Greek, though used in Latin.

36.—**old Damœtas**. A shepherd's name used by Theocritus and Vergil. This might appear a specific reference, but may simply be intended to suggest an old shepherd listening with pleasure to the younger as they play.

45.—**canker**. The canker-worm.

46.—**taint-worm.** The worm meant is not known. A spider, called a "taint," described by Sir Thomas Browne, has been suggested, but a spider is not a worm, and the term *taint* is one that might be applied to any insect supposedly injurious.

48.—**white-thorn.** The hawthorn.

50.—Verity notes that this appeal to the Nymphs is modelled on Theocritus, *Idyls*, I, 66-69, and on Vergil, *Eclogues*, X, 9-12. The places referred to are near the scene of his loss.

52.—Perhaps, as Warton suggested, the Druid burial-places at Kerig y Druidion in Denbighshire, spoken of by Camden.

54.—**Mona.** The isle of Anglesey.

55.—**Deva.** The Dee, a "wizard stream," as able, according to tradition, to foretell the fortunes of England and Wales, between which it flows, by changing its course.

61-63.—Orpheus, having, after the loss of Eurydice, treated the Thracian women with scorn, was torn to pieces by them, and his head thrown into the Hebrus, whence it was carried to Lesbos.

61.—**rout.** A company, especially a disorderly company, of persons. Comus's band are described as a rout. See *Stage direction* at l. 93.

64-84.—This famous passage is sometimes regarded as a digression, and in one sense it is, but it is not one like that in ll. 113-131, and it is connected with and naturally suggested by what precedes, though Milton is plainly thinking more about himself than of Edward King.

65.—"Shepherd" is here used, as in the pastoral allegory above, as practically equivalent to poet.

66.—**meditate the thankless Muse.** To meditate the Muse (Vergil's "*musam meditari*," *Eclogues*, I, 2, 6, 8) is to compose poetry. The Muse is "thankless" in that the poet gets little or nothing in return.

67.—**use.** Are used to do.

68, 69.—**Amaryllis, Neæra.** Names of sweethearts used in pastoral verse.

70.—Fame is sufficient reward, but (l. 73) Death ever forestalls this.—**clear.** Pure, single in intention.

71.—A mind so noble that it has conquered other infirmities may still feel the desire for fame. The idea is taken from classical sources.

74.—**blaze.** Glory, brilliance: a metaphorical use of *blaze* in its sense of a sudden or brilliant flashing into flame, found from the fifteenth century to our own day.

75.—**blind Fury.** Atropos, one of the three Fates (not Furies) is intended. The three Fates controlled the lives of men. Clotho spun the thread, Lachesis determined the destiny, and Atropos severed it with her shears.

76.—**slits.** Cut, not in the specialized sense of "cut lengthwise."—**But not.** But does not sever or destroy.

77.—**Phœbus.** Apollo, the god of poetry. He touches the ears as the seat of memory to intimate that the poet needs a reminder of what he should not forget.

79.—The meaning may be cleared of difficulty either by supplying *lies* from the next line, or by supplying a copula. The sense is, "Nor is fame set off to the world in the glittering foil (that is, gold-leaf, typifying external show) nor," etc., or "Nor does fame lie (consist) in the foil set off (made a show of) to the world, nor," etc.

81.—But lives and spreads aloft through the infallible decision assured by the clear-judging scrutiny and the wholly just testimony of Jove (here, as elsewhere in Milton, the Deity under the classic name to accord with the classic coloring of the pastoral).

85.—**Arethuse.** The spring Arethusa in Ortygia, near Syracuse. Arethusa, beloved by Alpheus in Arcadia, fled to Sicily and became this spring. Here used, as *Alpheus* in l. 132, to typify pastoral poetry, Sicily and Arcadia being the land of pastorals.

86.—The Mincius flowed near Mantua, the birthplace of Vergil, and here typifies Latin pastoral poetry, as Arethusa the Greek.

87.—**that strain.** What Apollo has said.

89.—**herald of the sea.** Triton (see *Comus*, 873, *n.*), herald of Neptune, god of the sea, who called the lesser deities to his counsels.

96.—**Hippotades.** The son of Hippotes, Æolus, god of the winds.

97.—Verity points out the curious fact that Edward King's brother, Henry King, in his poem in the memorial volume (see the prefatory note) distinctly refers to the vessel's having struck on a rock during a gale. Whether Milton was or was not informed of this fact, he certainly takes a poetical license.

99.—**Panope with all her sisters.** The Nereids, the fifty daughters of the sea-god, Nereus.

101.—**eclipse.** Referring to the belief that anything done at the time of an eclipse is destined to evil fortune.

103.—**Camus.** The deity of the river Cam, and therefore used to represent Cambridge.

104.—**bonnet sedge.** His bonnet (the word was formerly applied to caps and other head-coverings of men) is of sedge as characteristic of a river-god.

105.—**dim.** Presumably with age, if used in its present sense, but *dim* in Milton's time meant also simply "dark" (as in *Comus*, 5), and this is probably the sense here. Some commentators explain the "figures" as the markings on the sedge, but this does not accord with its edging of crimson.

106.—**sanguine flower.** The hyacinth which sprang from the blood of Hyacinthus, slain by Zephyrus. It is "inscribed with woe," as the ancients read the markings of the petals as *aiâi*, "alas!"

107.—**pledge.** Child. This use is derived from a child considered as a pledge of love between its parents.

108-131.—Ruskin has a full commentary on the passage in *Sesame and Lilies*.

109.—**the Pilot.** St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew, xvi, 19), here introduced as representing the Church, Edward King having purposed to take orders. Milton calls him "pilot" (steersman, not necessarily in the special modern sense), though he and his brother are referred to simply as fishermen. It must not of course be supposed that in using St. Peter in this way Milton subscribed to the Roman Catholic doctrine that St. Peter was the founder of the Roman church, and that to it is therefore given exclusively the "power of the keys."

110.—The keys are traditionally regarded as two in number, the one representing the power of binding, the other of loosing. Milton very effectively makes the one of gold, the other of iron, in place of gold and silver, as in Dante.

112.—**mitred.** Wearing the mitre, or bishop's cap, in token of his authority.

113.—The appropriateness of this passage of passionate denunciation, as out of keeping with the pastoral setting of the poem, is discussed in the prefatory note.

114.—**Enow.** Enough, that is, plenty. Verity suggests that ll. 114, 115 come with special force from St. Peter; see 1. Peter, v, 2.

116.—**Of other care.** Of other duty.

117.—Than how to scramble for the largest share at the feast provided for the shearers.

119.—**Blind mouths.** “Men naught else but mouths, and blind to all save what they may devour.”

119–121.—Milton here makes effective use of the traditional representation of the clergy as pastors or shepherds of their “flocks,” and essays to bring this passage in some measure into unity with the pastoral character of the poem by its means through the word “swain” in l. 113.

122.—**What recks.** Of what account is it?—**sped.** Provided for, cared for.

123.—**flashy.** Frothy, hence without substance, vapid. Milton often refers in his prose writings to the emptiness and ignorance of the preaching of his day.

124.—**scrannel.** Weak, thin, piping (used of the voice). Wright gives an illustration from the Nottinghamshire dialect: “She had such a scrannel voice.”

128, 129.—Usually held to refer to the secret (“privy”) activity of the Roman Catholics in making proselytes at this time, without any serious attempts (“and nothing said”) being made to put an end to it by the authorities of the Church.

130.—**two-handed engine.** “Engine” here has its general sense of “tool” or “instrument.” Milton undoubtedly means a sword, the adjective “two-handed” being apparently a reminiscence of 2. *Henry VI*, II, i, 46, but the question what sword he refers to, literally or figuratively, is still in doubt, despite many conjectures. The “engine” has been explained as the axe which should, as it did later, assail the evil in the Church by beheading Laud, as the axe laid to the root of the tree in the parable (Matthew, iii, 10); as the two houses of Parliament; as the two-edged sword of Revelation, i, 16; as the sword of St. Michael (merely because this was two-handed in *Paradise Lost*, II, 294, VI, 250–253); and as the sword of Justice. This last conjecture, that offered by Verity, is the best. He cites from Milton’s *Tenure of Kings*, “be he king, or tyrant, or emperor, the sword of Justice is above him,” and, again, “the trial of Justice which is the sword of God, superior to all mortal things.”—**at the door.** Close at hand.

132, 133.—**Alpheus.** See l. 85, *n*.

137.—**wanton.** Unrestrained.

138.—**swart star.** Sirius, the dog-star, here called swart, or dark, because of his connection with the dog-day heats, and the withering they cause.—**sparely looks.** Looks but little, little affects.

139.—**quaint**. Noticeably beautiful: an obsolete sense.—**enamelled**. Beautified with various colors like enamel work.

142.—**rathe**. Early.

143.—**crow-toe**. The wild hyacinth; now obsolete in this use.—**pale**. White.

144.—**freaked**. Streaked or spotted.

146.—**well-attired woodbine**. Milton's woodbine is probably the honeysuckle, and "well-attired" probably refers to its profusion of flowers.

149.—**amaranthus**. The prince's feather, or the love-lies-bleeding, according to the old herbals. Milton does not here mean the classic amaranthus, the unfading flower of heaven, or he would not pass on to speak of "daffadillies."

150.—**daffadilly**. The familiar daffadowndilly, or narcissus. See *Comus*, 838, *n*.

151.—**laureate hearse**. The hearse here meant is a special structure used in funerals, including the bier and frame above bearing armorial bearings and other decorations. To this often elegiac verses were pinned by friends of the dead person, rendering less figurative than it appears to us Milton's epithet "laureate," decked with laurel, by which he means the poems contributed by himself and others to the memorial volume on Edward King.

152.—"For so, to ease us a moment of our grief, let our thoughts, 'frail' because the real truth soon comes back to us, dally with the false surmise that the body of Lycidas is with us, while really (ll. 154 *ff.*) still at the mercy of the sea."

154.—"Whilst back and forth from sea to shore thou art washed." A bold ellipsis, but justified by its vigor.

158.—**monstrous world**. World of, that is, peopled by, monsters. Compare *Comus*, 533.

159.—**moist vows**. Votive rites accompanied by tears.

160.—**fable of Bellerus**. Fabled Bellerus. Bellerus is Milton's own personification of Land's End, or Bellerium, the opposite extreme from the Hebrides.

161.—**vision of the guarded mount**. The apparition of St. Michael, occupying, according to tradition, the "chair" called by his name on St. Michael's Mount near Penzance, and hence "guarded."

162.—**Namancos**. A town, or possibly only a castle, in Galicia, near Finisterre, shown in Mercator's *Atlas*, 1623 and 1636, and there presumably seen by Milton.—**Bayona's hold**.

Bayona and its fortress were south of Namancos in Galicia. Milton presumably took the two names directly from the *Atlas*, selecting the coast of Spain as less familiar and more remote and picturesque than that of France. A glance at the map will show that a line from Penzance escaping France will directly strike Galicia.

164.—Arion, the musician, thrown into the sea, was rescued by dolphins.

168.—**day-star**. Here the sun, though usually the morning-star, Lucifer.

170.—**tricks**. Arranges.—**ore**. Gold.

175.—See *Comus*, 838, *n*.

176.—**unexpressive**. That may not be expressed or described.—**nuptial song**. Of the marriage of the Lamb, described in Revelation, xix, 7.

181.—Compare Revelation, vii, 7, xxi, 4.

183.—**Genius**. The tutelary divinity of a special place in classic mythology.

186.—**uncouth**. Probably in the sense of simple, rude, untaught. Sidey, in *Modern Language Notes*, 23, 92, refers to Vergil, *Eclogues*, III, 26, 27.

188.—**tender stops of various quills**. The holes stopped by the fingers are "tender" from the elegiac notes that come from them. The "various quills" are "the varied strains of the elegy" (at ll. 76, 88, 113, 132, 165).

189.—**Doric lay**. Pastoral lay, the Doric being the dialect of Greek in which Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus wrote.

190. By lengthening their shadows.

192.—**blue**. Not so common a color as gray for shepherds' dress among the poets.

192.—Modelled, as Verity points out, on a line in Fletcher's *Purple Island*, VI, 77:

Home then, my lambs; the falling drops eschew;
To-morrow shall ye feast in pastures new;

and often, as he notes, misquoted with substitution of "fields" for "woods." The reference is to Milton's proposed change of life, either his resolve to change his residence from Horton to London, as Verity thinks possible, or, if decided at the time of this poem, his plan to travel.

VIII—TO MR. H. LAWES, ON HIS AIRS

This sonnet was written in 1646, and printed among the prefatory verses to the *Choice Psalms* of Henry and William Lawes, published in 1648. It is inserted here because of the connection of Henry Lawes with *Comus*, explained above. It may be added that Milton's praise is not merely the language of friendship; Henry Lawes is credited with having brought about by his songs a closer union and harmony between words and music.

4.—**Midas' ears.** King Midas, having decided in Pan's favor in judging a contest of musical skill between Pan and Phœbus, was given asses' ears by the latter.

11.—**hymn.** In reference to the volume in which it first appeared.—**story.** According to Warton, Cartwright's story of Ariadne was set to music by Lawes.

13.—See Dante's *Purgatory*, II.

14.—**milder.** In comparison with those of hell.

IX—ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

The massacre of the Vaudois by the Duke of Savoy because of their refusal to become Roman Catholics excited the utmost horror in England. It called forth a sharp protest and challenge from Cromwell on behalf of the Commonwealth. Milton, as Latin Secretary, despatched this message, and phrased his own sorrow and indignation in this, one of his finest sonnets. The date was 1655.

7.—Described in contemporary accounts.

12.—**triple Tyrant.** The Pope, in reference to his triple crown, typical of power on earth, in heaven, and in hell.

13.—**A hundredfold.** A variation of the famous saying of Tertullian, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," as noted by Masson.

14.—**Babylonian woe.** The Church of Rome so styled by the Puritans through their application of Revelation, xvii and xviii.

X—ON HIS BLINDNESS

No date is affixed to this sonnet. Milton became blind in 1652. Masson, after referring to the exultation of his enemies, who maintained that his misfortune was a divine judgment,

says: "Again and again in Milton's later writings, in prose and in verse, there are passages of the most touching sorrow over his darkened and desolate condition, with yet a tone of the most pious resignation, and now and then an outbreak of a proud conviction that God, in blinding his bodily eyes, had meant to enlarge and clear his inner vision, and make him one of the world's truest seers and prophets. The present sonnet is one of the first of these confidences of Milton on the subject of his blindness."

2.—**Ere half my days.** Milton became completely blind on or shortly after his forty-third year.

3.—See Matthew, xv, 14-30.

12.—**thousands.** The angels, his messengers, as their name implies.

14.—A famous line often quoted.

INDEX TO THE NOTES

- A, 83
 accustomed, 89
 Acheron, 134
 adjuring, 141
 adventurous, 104
 affects, 123
 Age of Gold, 77
 airy shell, 113
 allay, 105
 alley, 118
 amaranthus, 153
 Amaryllis, 149
 amazement, 121
 amber cloud, 119
 amber-dropping, 141
 ambrosial, 101, 141
 amiss, 108
 Amphitrite, 142
 Anchises' line, 142
 ancient, 118
 antic, 92
 Anubis, 78
 Arcady, 120
 Arethuse, 150
 Arion, 154
 artful, 129
 as, 75, 137
 Ashtaroth, 78
 asphodel, 140
 assays, 143
 attendance, 118
 Attendant Spirit, 98
 at the door, 152
 Attic boy, 91
 Aurora, 83
 awe, 102
 axle-tree, 75
 ay me, 130
 azurn, 142
- Baalim, 78
 Babylonian woe, 155
 baits, 131
 band, 142
 bare wand, 135
 Bayona's hold, 153-154
 be, 101
 Bear, the, 90
 becks, 84
 bellman, 90
 besprent, 132
 bested, 88
 birds of calm, 75
 blasts, 141
- blaze, 149
 blear illusion, 108
 blind Fury, 150
 blind mouths, 152
 blot, 107
 blow, 144
 blue, 154
 blue-haired, 102
 boast of skill, 116
 bolt, 138
 bonnet sedge, 151
 bosky bourne, 118
 bosomed, 85
 bosoms, 122
 bottom glade, 131
 bout, 87
 bower, 85
 brag, 138
 brakes, 107
 bright, 99
 bright-harnessed, 79
 brim, 107
 brooding, 83
 brow, 131
 brown, 92
 Brute, 140
 brute earth, 139
 brutish, 78
 budge, 137
 buskined, 91
 bustle, 123
 but not, 150
 buxom, 83
 by course, 101
 by due steps, 101
 by them, 132
- Camus, 151
 canker, 148
 canon laws of our foundation, 139
 care, 130, 151
 Carpathian wizard's hook, the, 141
 cassia, 144
 cast, 121
 casts, 111
 Cerberus, 83
 chair, 107
 change, 100
 characterized, 131
 charming-rod, 105
 Chaucer, 91
 cherubim, 89
 Cimmerian, 83
 civil-suited, 91

- clear, 149
 cloister's pale, 92
 close, 76
 clouted, 135
 commercing, 89
Comus, 93-98
 confidence, 133
 Conscience, 110
 consort, 77, 92
 constant, 122
 cordial julep, 136
 corners, 145
 corporal rind, 136
 Cotytto, 107
 country dancers, 143
 courtesy, 118
 court guise, 143
 courtly, 79
 covenants, 136
 cranks, 84
 creatures of the element, 117
 crew, 98
 crispèd, 143
 crofts, 131
 crown that Virtue gives, the, 100
 crow-toe, 153
 crude, 147
 crude surfeit, 129
 crystal glass, 104
 Cupid, 144, 145
 curb, 140
 cure, 142
 curious, 137
 curls, 134
 Cynic tub, the, 137
 cynosure, 85
 cypress lawn, 89
- daffadilly, 153
 Damœtas, 148
 dances, 143
 dapper, 106
 date of grief, 122
 day-star, 154
 dazzling spells, 108
 deadly forfeit, 74
 dear, 139
 Death, ribs of, 133
 debonair, 83
 defence is a good cause, 129
 delicacy, 136
 Delphic, 80
 Delphos, 77
 demons, 96
 descends or enters, 99
 desert cell, 123
 Deva, 149
 dews, 139
 diet, 89
 dim, 100, 151
 dim darkness, 116
 dingle, 118
 Diodati, 135
- dips, 139
 direct, 139
 discovers, 99
 disinherit Chaos, 119
 displayed, 76
 divine, 91
 doing abhorred rites, 131
 Doric lay, 154
 do thee little stead, 135
 downs, 130
 Dragon, Old, 77
 drouth of Phœbus, 104
 drove, 148
 drowsy-flighted, 132
 drudging goblin, the, 86
 Dryades, 143
 duck or nod, 143
 dun, 107
- easy numbers, 80
 eating cares, 87
 Echo, 111, 112, 113
 eclipse, 150
 eglantine, 84
 element, 117
 elysium, 115
 embowèd roof, 92
 enamelled, 153
 engaged, 109
 engine, 152
 enow, 139, 151
 ere a close, 132
 ere half my days, 156
 Ethiop queen, 88
 Euphrosyne, 83
 extreme shift, 116
 eye, 124
 eye me, 118
 eyne, 79
- fable of Bellerus, 153
 fables, 139
 faculties, 135
 faëry, 117
 fairly, 108
 faith, 105
 fall, 114
 fallows, 84
 fantastic, 84
 Fauns, 148
 fear of Jove, 89
 fence, 139
 finny drove, 106
 fire, 106
 First Brother, 98
 first Scene, 'he, 99
 fixèd, 88
 flamens, 77
 flashy, 152
 flat sea, 122
 flowery cave, 113
 fog, 116
 fond, 88, 104

- foreign, 115
 freaked, 153
 free, 83
 friar's lantern, 86
 frieze, 137
 frounced, 91

 gaudy trim, 74
 gay, 139
 gear, 108
 Genius, 92
 genius, 154
 gentle, 116, 120
 glancing, 104
 Glaucus, 141, 142
 glistening, 105
 globe, 76
 glozing courtesy, 108
 goblin, drudging, 86
 goes about to rise, 136
 golden key, 101
 gorgeous, 90
 Graces, the, 144
 grain, 89, 138
 granges, 108
 grant they be so, 121
 grave saws, 106
 gray-fly, 148
 grisly, 134
 Guendolen, 140
 guilty, 74

 habit, 98, 108
 Hæmony, 135
 hairy gown, 92
 halloo, 129
 hall or bower, 103
 happy trial, 134
 Harpies and Hydras, 134
 has, 102
 heat, 121, 142
 Hebe, 84
 Hecate, 107
 he knew, 147
 herald of the sea, 150
 herb, 132
 Hermes, 90
 her own loins, 137
 Hesperian tree, 124
 hideous, 77
 hills, snowy, 143
 hinds, 108
 Hippotades, 150
 his, 91
 hist, 89
 hit, 88, 117
 hoar, 84
 hollow round, 76
 homely, 138
 hookèd, 75
 how chance, 130
 huddling, 129
 hug, 108

 hundredfold, 155
 huswife, 138
 hutchèd, 137
 Hymen, 87
 hymn, 155

 Ida, 89
 I hate, 138
 ill is lost, 116
 ill-managed, 108
Il Penseroso, 81, 82, 88
 imbathe, 140
 Ind, 134
 Indian steep, 107
 influence, 75, 87, 119, 120
 inform, 109
 innumeros, 121
 insphered, 99
 in unsuperfluous even proportion, 139
 invite, 85
 Iris, 104
 iron stakes, 129
 Isis, 78
 Isle, but this, 101
 its, 76

 Jonson, 87
 Jove, 89, 99, 130
 joy, 136
 Juno, 137
 just hands, 101

 keys, 101, 151
 knot-grass, 132

 labored, 117
 laboring, 85
 labyrinth, 116
 Lady, 98
L'Allegro, 81, 82
 land-pilot's art, 118
 landskip, 84
 lank, 140
 Lars and Lemures, 77
 last fulfilling, 76
 laureate hearse, 153
 lawn, 75
 lawns, 84
 lawns and . . . leas, 143
 leans, 121
 leavy, 116
 Leucothea, 142
 lewdly, 139
 lickerish, 136
 lies, 85, 86
 lime-twigs, 136
 liquid, 143
 listened them, 132
 litter, 133
 livelong, 80
 livery, 84
 lodge, 121
 loose, 108

- lovelorn, 113
 low-roosted lark, 118
 Lucifer, 75
 lucky, 148
 Lybic Hammon, 78
Lycidas, 145-147
 Lydian airs, 87
- Mab, 85
 mace, 141
 madrigal, 129
 mansion, 99
 mansions, 77
 mantling, 117
 margent, 113
 masque, 87
 massy proof, 92
 matin, 86
 mazes, 109
 Meander, 113
 meditate, 132
 meditate the thankless muse, 149
 melancholy blood, 139
 Melibœus, 139
 melodious tear, 148
 Memnon, 88
 messes, 85
 mickle, 102
 Midas' ears, 155
 midst, 74
 mighty Pan, the, 75
 milder, 155
 mildew-blast, 135
 mincing, 143
 mintage, 131
 minute drops, 92
 misery, 104
 mitred, 151
 moist vows, 153
 Moloch, 78
 Mona, 149
 Monody, 147
 monstrous rout, 131
 monstrous world, 153
 monumental oak, 92
 moon-loved maze, 79
 Morpheus, 88
 morris dance, 106
 mortal, 100
 mould, 101
 mount, 162
 mountain watch, 105
 mouths, 152
 murmurs, 130
 Musæus, 91
 Muse, 148, 149
 Muses, the, 74, 148
 music of the spheres, 76, 145
 musky, 144
 myrtle, 75
- Naiades, 114
 Namancos, 153
- Narcissus, 113
 nard, 144
 navel, 130
 near-ushering, 116
 Neæra, 149
 nectared, 129
 nectared lavers, 140
 Nepenthes, 136
 Nereus, 140
 nerves, 136, 139
 next, 136
 nice, 107
 night-founded, 129
 night-raven, 83
 night-steeds, 79
 ninefold, 77
 noise, 76
 notion, 139
 nuptial song, 154
 nut-brown, 85
 Nymphs, 77
- oaten, 120
 obscured, 131
 obtruding, 138
 Oceanus, 141
 Old Dragon, the, 77
 olive, 75
 ominous, 103
 once more, 147
 one, 107
 one way, 75
On His Blindness, 155-156
*On His Having Arrived at the Age of
 Twenty-three*, 80
On Shakespeare, 79, 80
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont,
 155
On the Morning of Christ's Nativity,
 73, 74
 ore, 137, 154
 or ere, 75
 organ, 77
 orient, 104
 Orpheus, 87, 149
 Orus, 78
 Osiris, 78, 79
 ounce, 104
 outwatch the Bear, 90
 over-exquisite, 120
- pageantry, 87
 pale, 91, 153
 palmer, 109
 Pan, 108
 Panope, 150
 paramour, 74
 parching, 148
 parley, 114
 pastoral reed, 120
 pearlèd, 140
 pensioners, 88
 pensive, 123

- Peor, 78
 perfect, 104, 110
 period, 133
 perplexed, 102
 pert, 106
 pestered, 100
 pet, 137
 Philomel, 89
 Phœbus, 150
 pillared, 134
 Pilot, the, 151
 pinching, 86
 pledge, 151
 plight, 122
 plighted, 117
 plumes, 123
 ply the sampler, 138
 poison, 103
 pole, 106
 pollute, 75
 pomp, 87
 port, 117
 pranked, 138
 prevent, 74, 133
 prevented, 116
 pride, 138
 print, 74
 printless feet, 142
 prithe, 130
 proportioned, 118
 Psyche, 144, 145
 pulling, 86
 pulse, 137
 purchase, 134
 purfled, 144
 puts by, 136
- quaint, 77, 108, 153
 quarters, 102
 quills, 154
 quips, 84
- rathe, 153
 rebecks, 85
 recks, 124
 reed, 120
 regard, 135
 region, 76
 resort, 123
 ribs of Death, the, 133
 rife, 110
 rime royal, 74
 rises, 142
 rites, 107
 rout, 105, 149
 rule, 120
 russet, 84
- sad, 89, 109
 sadly, 130
 sage poets, 130
 sages, 74
 sampler, 138
 sanguine flower, 151
 sapphire, 101
 Saturn's reign, 89
 sceptred pall, 90
 scrannel, 152
 scrip, 135
 Scylla, 115
 seat, 142
 Second Brother, 98
 secret, 74
 secure, 85
 seeks to, 123
 serene, 100
 session, 77
 several, 79
 several government, 101
 Shakespeare, 80, 87
 shatter, 147
 shelves, 106
 shepherd lad, 135
 shew, 130
 shew'th, 80
 shoon, 135
 shrewd, 141
 shrine, rural, 115
 shroud, 118, 148
 shrouds, 107
 siding, 110
 silly, 76
 simples, 135
 simply, 75
 singèd air, 143
 single, 122
 single darkness, 110
 Sirens three, 114
 Sisters of the sacred well, 148
 sleep, 77
 slits, 150
 slope, 106
 smooth-dittied, 104
 smooth-haired silk, 137
 smoothly, 145
 snaky twine, 79
 Sons of Morning, 76
 soothest, 140
 sooty flag of Acheron, the, 134
 so to seek, 122
 sounds and seas, 106
 sovran, 103
 spangled, 74
 sparely looks, 152
 spare Temperance, 139
 speckled, 77
 sped, 152
 spell of, 92
 spheres, the, 76, 106, 114, 145
 spongy air, 108
 spruce, 143

- sprung, 133
 square, 118
 stabled wolves, 131
 starlight, 117
 Star of Arcady, 120
 starry choir, 106
 starved, 88
 star-ypointing, 80
 state, 84, 102
 stealth, 130
 steep, 105
 Stoic fur, the, 137
 stole, 89, 109
 stops, 154
 story, 155
 strook, 76
 Stygian, 83
 such two, 133
 sung, 76
 sunshine, 85
 surcharged, 137
 suspicious flight, 108
 swart star, 152
 swilled, 108
 swingses, 77
 swinked, 117
 Sylvan, 92, 116

 taint-worm, 149
 tale, 84
 tamed, 85
 tawny sands, 106
 team, 74
 tease, 138
 teeming, 108
 tells his tale, 84
 tender, 154
 Tethys, 141
 Thammuz, 78
 than, 75
 then, 86
 Thetis, 142
 thievish Night, 109
 think what, 138
 this, 100
 those, 99
 though, 120
 thousands, 156
 Thyrsis, 129
 tissued, 77
 to, 130
To Mr. H. Lawes, on His Airs, 155
 took, 76
 to-ruffled, 123
 tourneys, 91
 toy, 88, 130
 trains, 108
 tributary gods, 101
 tricked, 91
 tricks, 154
 triple Tyrant, 155
 Triton, 141
 triumph, 87

 trophies hung, 91
 trust, 102
 tufted, 85, 111
 turning sphere, 75
 turtle-wing, 75
 twice-battered god, 78
 twine, 79, 106
 two-handed engine, 152
 Typhon, 79
 Tyrant, triple, 155
 Tyrian, 78

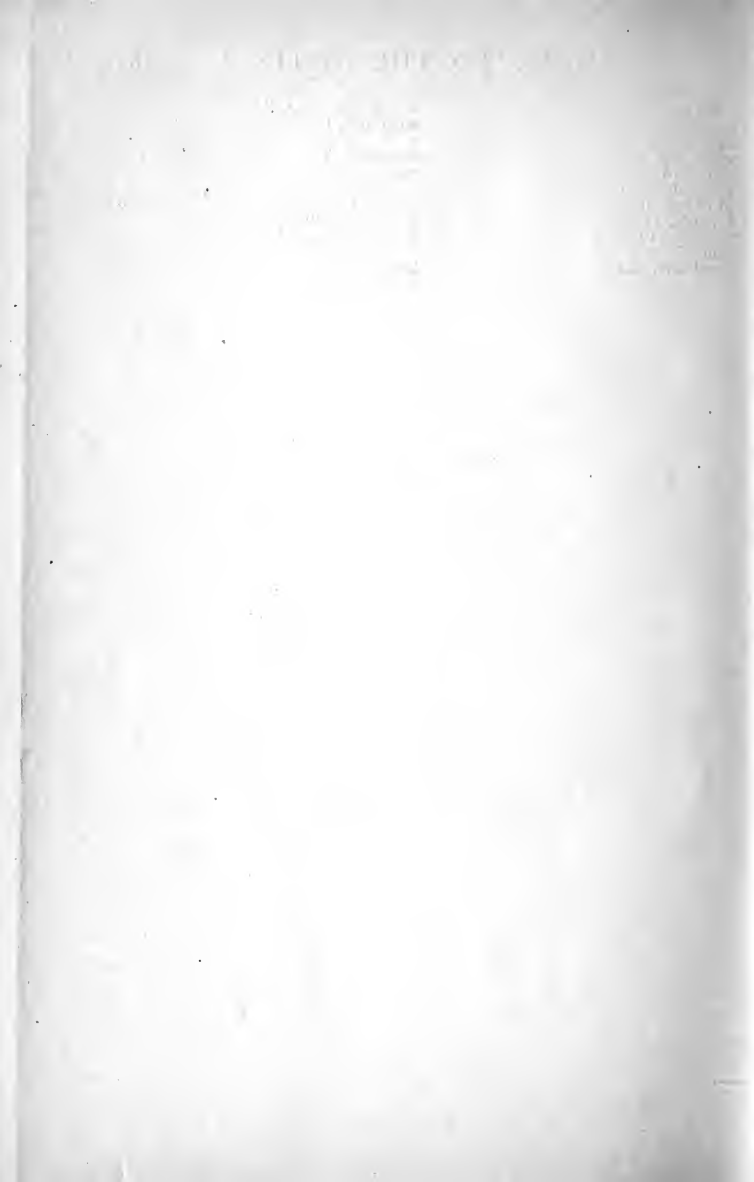
 unadornèd, 101
 uncouth, 83, 154
 unexempt condition, 136
 unexpressive, 76, 154
 union, 76
 unless, 115
 unmoulding, 131
 unmuffle, 119
 unprincipled, 122
 unrepovèd, 84
 unseen, 84
 unshowered, 79
 unsphere, 90
 unsunned, 124
 unthread thy joints, 135
 unvalued, 80
 unwilling, 132
 unwithdrawing hand, 137
 urchin blasts, 141
 urn, 148
 use, 149

 various bustle of resort, 123
 vein, 74
 velvet heads, 142
 vermeil-tinctured, 138
 Vesta, 88
 virtuous, 91, 135
 vision, 117
 vision of the guarded mount,
 153
 vizored, 136
 vocal air, 114
 votarist, 109
 Vulcan, 136

 wakes, 107
 waking bliss, 115
 wanton, 152
 wanton wiles, 84
 warranted, 118
 wassailers, 109
 wattled cotes, 120
 weeds, 87, 124
 well, 110
 well-attired woodbine, 153
 welter, 148
 what, 138
 what if, 121
 what needs, 80, 122

what recks, 152
what time, 117
where, 102
while, 136
whist, 75
white-thorn, 149
wind me, 108
wizards, 74
wonest, 119
wont, 74
woodbine, 153

wreathèd smiles, 84
wrinkled, 141
ychained, 77
yclept, 83
ye, 110
yet, 134
yon small hill, 117
youngest-teemèd, 79
Zephyr, 83





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